



Small Group Guide – October 15 & 18

Under Construction – Rebuild the Wall

Date: October 15 & 18, 2026

Focus Passage(s): Nehemiah 1-2

Theme: When God places a burden, dream, or goal on our hearts, we can pause, pray, plan, be patient, and be prepared as we trust Him to lead.

Suggested Schedule (60 minutes total)

Segment	Time	Description
Icebreaker	10 min	Get comfortable, begin connecting
Intro/Recap	5 min	Read the key passages for the week
Group Discussion	25 min	Dive into Scripture and discuss application
Deeper Dive Option	5–10 min	Deeper Bible study or individual challenge
Prayer & Requests	10–15 min	Close in prayer for growth + personal needs

Welcome + Icebreaker (10 min)

What is something you dreamed about doing when you were younger? Did you ever do it, or did the dream change along the way?

Are you naturally more likely to jump into something immediately or think, plan, and prepare for a long time before acting? How has that tendency helped or hurt you?

Key Message Recap

Most of us have something we would like to change, accomplish, rebuild, or pursue. It might involve our career, health, family, marriage, finances, faith, serving, or a destructive habit we want to leave behind.

Having a dream or goal is one thing. Knowing what to do with it is another.

Nehemiah gives us a picture of someone with a significant burden and a huge goal. What is especially interesting is what he does before he ever starts rebuilding.

Discussion Questions (25 min)

Nehemiah was a Jewish man serving as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. A cupbearer did much more than taste the king's food and wine. He occupied a position of significant trust and had unusual access to the king.

Although Nehemiah lived in Persia, his heart remained connected to Jerusalem which had been devastated more than a century earlier. The temple had eventually been rebuilt, but the city's protective walls remained broken and its gates had been destroyed by fire.

Then Nehemiah receives a report about the people living there.

Read Nehemiah 1:2-4 The news breaks his heart.

Nehemiah was a capable leader with access to one of the most powerful people in the world. His natural response could have been to immediately begin solving the problem.

Instead, he stops. He mourns. He fasts. He prays.

Before Nehemiah ever rebuilds a wall, God begins doing something in Nehemiah.

Read Nehemiah 1:11 Nehemiah hears about a problem that matters deeply to him. Yet he does not immediately rush to the king or begin developing a public campaign.

The message summarizes his first response this way: "The first instinct of a leader is to act. Do something! Get on the solution side. But that's not what Nehemiah does. Instead, he does this -

"In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven."

Opening Question What stands out to you about Nehemiah's response to the news from Jerusalem?

Key Truth - Sometimes the most important thing we can do before taking action is pause long enough to seek God.

Pause Before You Act

Read Nehemiah 1:4 Nehemiah was a leader, and leaders naturally want to solve problems. He also had unusual access to the king, so it would have been easy for him to immediately ask Artaxerxes for help.

Instead, Nehemiah pauses.

Pausing can be especially difficult when something feels urgent. We want to fix the relationship, change the situation, make the decision, send the message, accept the opportunity, or begin working toward the goal. But moving quickly is not always the same thing as moving wisely.

A pause creates space for us to ask whether our initial reaction is actually where God wants us to go.

Discuss

- Why is pausing difficult when we really want something to change?
- When are you most likely to act too quickly?
- Have you ever made a situation worse because you responded before you had enough information, wisdom, or prayer?
- What is the difference between procrastination and intentionally pausing to seek God?

Key Truth - Pausing is not necessarily inactivity. Sometimes it is the first act of wisdom.

Pray Before You Make Your Move

Read Nehemiah 1:4-11 Nehemiah does not simply pause and worry. He turns his burden into prayer.

The message identifies two important things that happen when we pray: we intentionally invite God into our dream or dilemma, and we allow God to work not only in our circumstances but also in us.

That second part matters. Sometimes we begin praying because we want God to change something around us, only to discover that God wants to change something within us as well.

Nehemiah knows he will eventually need to speak with the king. But before he goes to the king, he goes to God.

(continued)

Discuss

- Why is prayer sometimes something we do after we have exhausted our own solutions rather than before we begin?
- Have you ever prayed for God to change a situation and discovered that He was also changing you?
- How might prayer change the way we approach a dream, goal, decision, or difficult circumstance?
- Is there something you have been thinking about, worrying about, or planning for more than you have been praying about?

Key Truth - Before Nehemiah talked to the king about his problem, he talked to God about it.

Prayer and Planning Belong Together

Read Nehemiah 2:4-8 After months of prayer, Nehemiah finally gets an opportunity to speak with the king. When Artaxerxes asks how he can help, Nehemiah is ready.

He knows where he wants to go. He has considered how long he will be gone. He knows he will need letters granting safe passage. He has thought about building materials and knows where the timber could come from.

Nehemiah had been praying, but while he prayed, he was also preparing. The message describes it this way:

"Pray as if it depends on God. Plan as if it depends on you."

That statement is not meant to remove God from our planning. The sermon makes the opposite point. God can use both prayer and careful planning to accomplish His purposes. Our plans remain surrendered to Him because He may affirm them, delay them, redirect them, or change them completely.

Discuss

- Why can people sometimes treat planning and trusting God as though they are opposites?
- What does Nehemiah's preparation reveal about how seriously he took his prayer?
- How can planning become unhealthy if we stop leaving room for God to redirect us?
- What is something you are praying about that you could also begin preparing for?

Key Truth - Faith trusts God enough to pray and takes the opportunity seriously enough to prepare.

Be Patient When God's Timing is Slower Than Yours

The message points out that approximately four months pass between Nehemiah first hearing the report and his conversation with the king. Four months is a long time when something weighs heavily on you.

Nehemiah continues serving the king while carrying this burden. He prays and plans, but he cannot force the opportunity.

Even after arriving in Jerusalem, he waits another three days and quietly inspects the walls before announcing his plans.

The message reminds us, "God's timing is rarely our timing."

Waiting does not necessarily mean nothing is happening. The message suggests that God can use waiting to test our resolve, strengthen our faith, and refine our plans. The delay may actually prepare us for something we would not have been ready to handle immediately.

Discuss

- Why is waiting especially difficult when we believe something is important?
- What are you most tempted to do when God's timing feels too slow?
- How can waiting strengthen faith instead of simply creating frustration?
- Have you ever looked back and been grateful that something did not happen as quickly as you originally wanted?
- Where might God currently be asking you to remain patient?

Key Truth - Delay does not automatically mean failure. God can use waiting as part of our preparation.

Be Prepared for Opposition

Read Nehemiah 2:17-20 Eventually, Nehemiah tells the people what God has placed on his heart.

They respond enthusiastically, "**Yes, let's rebuild the wall!**"

It is an exciting moment. Nehemiah has prayed, prepared, waited, traveled to Jerusalem, inspected the walls, and shared the vision. Then opposition arrives.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mock the plan and question Nehemiah's motives.

The presence of opposition does not automatically mean Nehemiah misunderstood God. In fact, throughout the story, Nehemiah will repeatedly have to decide whether opposition will distract him from what God has called him to do.

(continued)

Discuss

- Why do we sometimes assume that God's direction should produce an easy path?
- What kinds of opposition can cause us to give up on something important?
- How can we distinguish between opposition we should persevere through and a legitimate warning that should cause us to reconsider?
- What helps us remain grounded when other people do not understand or support something we believe God is asking us to do?

Key Truth - Following God's direction does not guarantee an obstacle-free path.

More Truth From the Gospels (10 min)

Nehemiah gives us a practical picture of prayer, planning, patience, and action. We see many of those same rhythms in the life of Jesus.

Jesus did not live reactively. He regularly withdrew to pray, waited on the Father's direction, taught His followers to consider the cost of their decisions, and remained faithful when opposition came.

Jesus Made Space to Pray

Read Luke 5:15-16 As Jesus' popularity grows, so do the demands on Him. More people want His attention, healing, and teaching. Yet Luke tells us that Jesus regularly withdrew to lonely places to pray.

If anyone could have argued that the needs were too urgent to pause, it was Jesus. Instead, prayer remained part of the rhythm of His life.

Foundational Truth - Urgency does not eliminate our need for prayer. Often, it increases it.

Discuss

- What usually gets pushed aside first when life becomes busy or urgent?
- What does Jesus' example teach us about the relationship between prayer and action?

Jesus Taught People to Consider the Cost

Read Luke 14:28-33 Jesus uses the picture of someone planning to construct a building. Before beginning, that person sits down and considers what will be required to finish it.

Jesus' larger point concerns the cost of following Him, but the illustration assumes something important: thoughtful planning is wise.

Nehemiah demonstrates that same wisdom. When his opportunity arrives, he has already considered what the mission will require.

Foundational Truth - Faith does not require thoughtless action. Following Jesus involves intentional decisions about what obedience will require.

Discuss Where might God be asking you not merely to dream about something, but to thoughtfully consider what obedience would require?

Jesus Did Not Allow Other People's Timelines to Control Him

Throughout the Gospels, people pressure Jesus to act according to their expectations. Yet Jesus consistently operates according to the Father's purposes rather than the urgency of the crowd.

That does not mean Jesus is unconcerned about people. It means His actions flow from a deeper dependence upon His Father.

Read John 7:1-9 Jesus' brothers want Him to act publicly according to their timetable. Jesus refuses to allow their expectations to determine His timing.

Foundational Truth - Faithfulness sometimes means resisting the pressure to move before the right time.

Discuss

- Whose expectations are most likely to pressure you into moving faster than you should?
- How can we become more comfortable waiting when other people expect immediate action?

Jesus Prepared His Disciples for Opposition

Read John 16:33 Jesus does not promise His followers an easy path. He prepares them for difficulty while grounding their hope in Him.

That is important when we pursue something we believe God is asking us to do. Obstacles do not automatically mean we have missed God.

Foundational Truth - We can prepare for difficulty without becoming controlled by fear of it.

Real-life Application (5 min)

Nehemiah begins with a burden. He sees something that is broken and cannot simply ignore it.

Maybe there is something like that in your life right now. It could be a relationship that needs attention, a spiritual habit you need to rebuild, a career decision, a ministry opportunity, a change in your family, a destructive pattern you want to break, or a dream you have carried for years.

The question is not simply, "**What do I want to accomplish?**"

A better question might be, "**What might God want to do in me and through me as I pursue this?**"

Nehemiah's story reminds us that the process matters. We do not have to rush ahead of God to prove that we are serious.

Reflection Question What dream, goal, burden, or area of your life might God be asking you to bring before Him right now?

Next Steps Challenge (5 min)

This week, use Nehemiah's five movements to think about one specific dream, decision, burden, or goal in your life.

Pause. Resist the urge to immediately fix or force the situation. Create enough space to honestly ask God what He wants.

Pray. Bring the situation before God consistently. Ask Him to work in the circumstances, but also give Him permission to change your heart, assumptions, and desires.

Plan. If God opened the door, what would you need to be ready? Identify one practical thing you could begin preparing now without forcing the outcome.

Be patient. Refuse to interpret waiting as automatic evidence that nothing is happening. Continue being faithful with what God has already placed in front of you.

Be prepared. Recognize that obstacles may come. Decide now that opposition will send you back to prayer and wisdom rather than automatically causing you to quit.

Personal Challenge Which of these five areas do you most need to practice right now, and what will that look like this week?

Prayer Time (10 min)

Prayer for Direction and Wisdom

Begin by thanking God that we do not have to navigate our dreams, decisions, burdens, and difficult circumstances alone. Ask Him to slow us down when we are tempted to rush ahead and give us courage when the time comes to move.

Pray for wisdom about the specific goals and burdens represented in the group. Ask God to shape those desires so that they increasingly reflect His purposes rather than simply our preferences. Pray for clarity in planning, patience when His timing feels slow, and perseverance when obstacles appear.

Also pray that God would use seasons of waiting to shape the group rather than allowing waiting to become wasted time. Ask Him to help each person remain faithful with what is already in front of them while trusting Him with what comes next.

"God, where am I trying to move ahead of You? What is the next faithful thing You want me to do?"

Deeper Dive - Character Study

Joseph: When the Dream Takes Longer Than Expected

Primary Scripture: Genesis 37; 39-41; 50:15-21

Overview

Joseph's story begins with dreams.

As a young man, Joseph receives dreams suggesting that God has something significant ahead for him. Yet almost nothing that follows looks like progress toward those dreams.

His brothers betray him and sell him into slavery. He serves faithfully in Potiphar's household only to be falsely accused and imprisoned. Even after helping Pharaoh's cupbearer in prison, Joseph is forgotten for another two years.

Joseph's story gives us a powerful companion to Nehemiah because it reminds us that God's purposes often unfold much more slowly and differently than we expect.

Joseph cannot control the timetable, but he can decide how he will live while he waits.

Key Moment 1: Joseph Has a Dream

Read Genesis 37:5-11 Joseph's story begins with dreams that point toward something in his future, but he has no idea how those dreams will unfold. In fact, the path toward their fulfillment will look nothing like something Joseph would have planned.

Discuss

- Why do we tend to assume that knowing the destination means we also understand the route?
- Have you ever pursued something only to discover that the path looked very different from what you expected?
- Why is surrender important when we believe God may be leading us toward something?

Key Truth - God's purpose may remain steady even when the path looks completely different from what we expected.

Key Moment 2: Joseph Is Faithful Where He Is

Read Genesis 39:1-6 and 39:20-23 Joseph spends years in circumstances he would never have chosen. Yet Scripture repeatedly shows him acting faithfully in the place where he currently is.

He serves well in Potiphar's household. Later, even in prison, Joseph earns responsibility because of his character.

Joseph cannot control when his circumstances will change, but he can control whether he will remain faithful.

Discuss

- Why can focusing entirely on the future make us less faithful in the present?
- What responsibilities has God already placed in front of you while you are waiting for something else?
- How can today's faithfulness prepare us for tomorrow's opportunity?

Key Truth - Waiting for what comes next does not excuse us from being faithful with what God has given us now.

Key Moment 3: Joseph Waits Longer Than Expected

Read Genesis 40:20-23 and 41:1 Joseph correctly interprets the cupbearer's dream and asks him to remember Joseph when he is restored to his position.

The cupbearer forgets. Then Genesis tells us that two full years pass.

Joseph cannot force the opportunity. He has to wait.

Discuss

- What do you imagine those two years were like for Joseph?
- What lies are we tempted to believe when waiting stretches much longer than expected?
- How can a long delay affect our confidence in what we once believed?
- What helps us remain spiritually grounded when there is no visible progress?

Key Moment 4: Joseph Is Ready When the Opportunity Comes

Read Genesis 41:14-40 When Pharaoh finally summons Joseph, the opportunity comes quickly. Joseph is prepared.

He acknowledges that God is the One who provides understanding, interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and then offers a detailed plan for preparing Egypt for the coming famine.

Years of waiting have not made Joseph passive. When the door finally opens, he is ready to walk through it.

Discuss

- What similarities do you see between Joseph and Nehemiah?
- How did Joseph's years of serving and waiting prepare him for this moment?
- What can you prepare today even if you cannot control when an opportunity will come?

Key Truth - Preparation during the waiting can position us to respond wisely when the opportunity arrives.

Key Moment 5: Joseph Sees God's Work Differently in Hindsight

Read Genesis 50:15-21 Near the end of Genesis, Joseph looks back on everything that has happened. He does not pretend his brothers' actions were good. He recognizes their harmful intentions while also seeing that God was able to accomplish something beyond what they intended.

Joseph could not have understood all of that while sitting in the pit or the prison. Perspective came later.

Discuss

1. What parts of Joseph's story probably made the least sense while he was experiencing them?
 2. How might Joseph's story encourage someone whose plans currently seem stalled?
 3. Why is it important not to interpret every delay as failure?
 4. How can we trust God's purposes without assuming we know exactly what outcome He will produce?
-

Key Takeaways

Joseph's story reminds us that having a dream does not mean controlling the route or timetable. His circumstances repeatedly move in directions that seem inconsistent with where his life is ultimately going.

Yet Joseph remains faithful where he is. He serves, develops, waits, and is prepared when the opportunity finally arrives.

Like Nehemiah, Joseph shows us that waiting does not have to be wasted time. God can use the period between a dream and its fulfillment to shape our character, deepen our dependence on Him, and prepare us for responsibilities we may not yet be ready to carry.

Additional Scriptures for Further Study

Proverbs 16:3

A reminder to commit our actions to the Lord rather than pursuing plans independently of Him.

Proverbs 16:9

This verse captures the relationship between human planning and God's direction.

Psalms 27:13-14

David connects waiting for God with courage and confidence in His goodness.

James 1:5

When we need wisdom, James encourages us to ask God for it.

James 4:13-15

James cautions against making plans as though we control the future and encourages humble dependence upon God's will.

Philippians 4:6-7

Paul encourages believers to bring concerns before God through prayer rather than allowing anxiety to control them.