

The Last Throw of the Dice



Nehemiah

INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

The Last Throw Of The Dice

Studies on Nehemiah

How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of Old Testament studies in Psalms 94 to 96.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work **before** you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some Brief Background On Nehemiah

Often Nehemiah is used as a blueprint for Christian Leadership and strategic management. There are a lot of useful leadership tips in the book.

Fundamentally though, as the last historical book of the Old Testament, Nehemiah functions as a testimony to the failure of God's people. Ultimately the question that hangs in the air at the end of the book is 'What will happen to God's promises to his chosen people?'

The book also throws up the struggle of God's people to trust him and believe his promises. It begins around 446 BC with Nehemiah as cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes in Babylonia. He received news that God's people in Jerusalem are in great trouble and disgrace. How does Nehemiah respond? What is God's response and concern? What should ours be?

These are questions the book explores. In the end though, it is clear that the only hope of God's people is the fulfillment of God's promise in Christ.

4. In Chapter 2 Nehemiah says twice (v8, 18) “the gracious hand of my God was upon me.” What does that mean?

In what sense could we say today that ‘the gracious hand of God is upon us’ OR would that be inappropriate?

5. Why can Nehemiah say God had ‘put in (his) heart’ to do something for Jerusalem? (2: 12) What in chapters 1 – 2 informs you about how God did this?

Our Own Situation

6. What should cause us to weep as God’s people today?

7. What things can we learn from Nehemiah 1 – 2 about prayer?

8. When is it hard to maintain commitment to God and his promises?

9. What do these chapters teach us about:

- God's grace?

- What we should care about?

Study 2 **What Causes Disunity?**

Nehemiah 5

Getting Started

1. What *is* unity among people of God?
2. What can destroy our unity?
3. What impact can our disunity have on the unbelievers in the world around us?

Thinking It Through

4. What difficulties was the average Jewish 'man in the street' facing?
5. What was the sin of the nobles and officials?
(You may want to look at Exodus 22: 25 and Leviticus 25: 36 – 46)

6. Contrast Nehemiah's own approach regarding his entitlement/ allowance as a Governor with the behaviour of the nobles and officials.

7. What motivates Nehemiah? (v9, 15)

Our Own Situation

8. Throwing people into slavery, lending money at exorbitant rates and generally ripping off brothers and sisters in Christ – are probably not our primary areas of temptation or sin. What are the contemporary equivalents for us as Christians?

9. By contrast Nehemiah sets an alternative pattern. Read Philippians 2: 5 – 11. Positively, where are the areas where, as a result of our fear of the Lord, we can serve and give rather than take advantage of others?

10. Think through one area where you can take steps to humbly serve this week.

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

- What are the 'sinful' options you are tempted to take when you are under pressure or face opposition?

- Do you ever feel personally threatened (maybe as a leader) - ie. because you feel inadequate, lacking in skills, not as 'popular' as you'd like, lacking authority etc. When is that an issue for you? What situations especially? What can Nehemiah 6 – 7: 3 teach you about how to deal with these feelings of inadequacy?

- How is Nehemiah 7: 1 – 3 a helpful reminder about how we should go about appointing leaders?

- How do we cultivate 'Fear of the Lord'? (7: 2)

Study 4 Only Skin Deep

Nehemiah 12: 27 – 13: 31

We are now jumping to the end of the book. Nehemiah seems to promise so much in terms of hope for God's people. A godly leader re-groups the people and helps them rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. At the same time he also secures their recommitment to God's law. Yet once we reach the end of the book we almost appear to be back where we started from. Let's take a look at it....

Getting Started

1. How would you describe your 'average' response:
 - to your own sin.

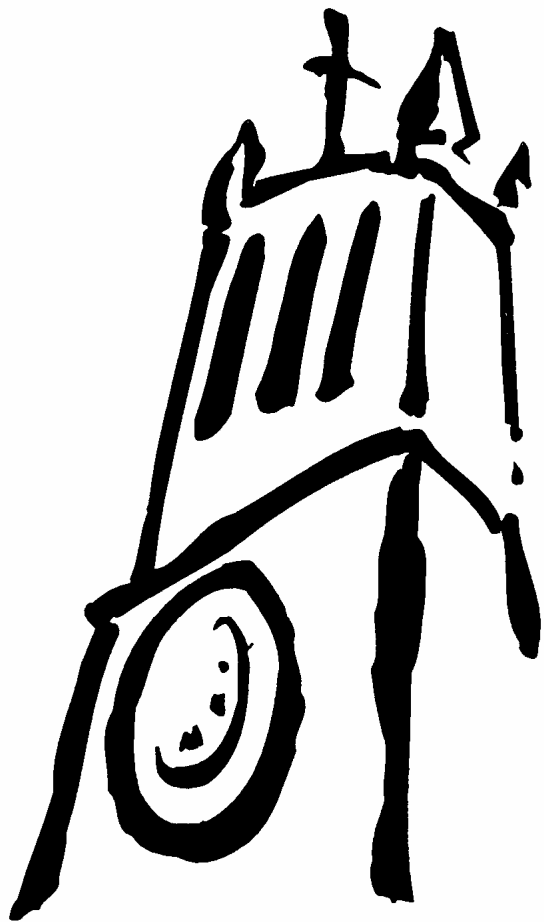
 - to the sin of others.

2. When you sin:
 - do you feel a long way from God?

 - do you doubt or wonder if you will stay a Christian for the long haul?

Notes

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Holy Trinity Adelaide
87 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000
t: 8213 7300
f: 8212 3611
office@trinity.asn.au
www.trinityadelaide.org.au