

The Abundant Life
Sermon Series: *Repairing Broken Walls*, pt. 1
Nehemiah 1:1-11
Pastor Gerald L. Stigall

Overview of the book and of the message:

Please refer to the overview on the other side of this guide.

Introduction:

What are the characteristics of one who experiences the abundant life? In Nehemiah 1 we see three qualities of one into whose life abundance flows.

Availability:

- As the New Year begins, reflect on how much margin there is in your life?
- Are you “skimming” through life or drinking deep of God’s abundance for you?
- What might you say “No” to so that you could say “Yes” to God?

Awareness:

- What are qualities of someone whom you know who listens well? What does he/she do to communicate to you that you are understood?
- Which of these qualities or actions might you incorporate to become more aware of others?
- We are bombarded with “urgent, breaking news” every day and several times a day. Many of us suffer from sensory overload. What might you do to become aware of the real needs of those near and far? What practices have you discovered to remove the “clutter” of noise around you so that we you better learn about the heartfelt desires and needs of others?

Attentiveness to God

- Look at Nehemiah’s prayer in vss. 5-11. What aspects of his prayer do you notice?
- In the message I cited no less than 12 passages which are rooted in his prayer. To see how that is the case, reflect on these Scriptures: *Deut. 4:25-31, 5:10, 7:9, 21, 9:29, 30:1-5, Lev. 26:27-45, I Kings 8:29, II Chronicles 6:20, 36-40; 7:15, Psalm 130:2*. What might his example say to you regarding Scripture and your prayers to the Lord?
- Reflect on his prayer using the acronym *A.C.T.S.* (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). How might his attentiveness to the Lord in these four areas influence you in your prayer life?

God created you to be in a vibrant and vital relationship with Him. He desires to pour abundant life into you! Nehemiah represents one who was fully alive in God. As we will see, he understood that the joy of the Lord was his strength (Neh. 8:10). Why not pray that the Lord will open new vistas of insight for you and our church family through our study of Nehemiah that will reveal the abundant life provided us in Christ.

Whom did you **B.L.E.S.S.** this past week? How?

Whom do you plan to BLESS this coming week? How?

Introduction to Nehemiah

Who was Nehemiah? And, what benefit might there be to study his book? What current applications might we make about a book that was written so long ago and about something which on the surface seems irrelevant to us? LifeGuide Bible Studies helps us to respond to these important questions. Note their thoughts which I'm citing below:

Nehemiah was in leadership during an extraordinary time in Israel's history. He faced opposition from all sides—both from his own people and from outside forces. A little background will help set the stage for understanding the pressures Nehemiah faced.

From antiquity, Ezra and Nehemiah have been considered almost as one book. The two books cover a period of about one hundred years. In 587 B.C. Judah was removed from the land of Israel and deported to Babylon with only a few left in the land. In 538 B.C. Cyrus sent some of the people back to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah are all wrapped up in this history. Zerubbabel built the temple, Ezra brought the Law back into Israel's life and Nehemiah rebuilt the wall that made Jerusalem secure.

The amazing thing is that Israel had more autonomy and distinctiveness than at any time of their existence as a sovereign state. The Persian Empire allowed the people to practice their religious convictions with seriousness, and this probably accounts for why Israel had such a pristine religious life at this time.

Though Zerubbabel and Ezra worked more in the religious realm, Nehemiah was really sent to Judah to be governor of the land, and that gave him considerably more ability to make some lasting changes in the life of the people. The people needed Nehemiah's strong leadership to handle the opposition to their work.

The Israelites living in the land were fairly passive at this point in history. They adapted to the culture around them because they were such a small remnant. Their intermarrying and political ties made this considerably worse.

Nehemiah's gifts in administration and perseverance enabled him to mold this people back into the "people of God" so they could obey God's commands and have a distinction from the people around them. This is where Nehemiah shines through. It was not enough just to build the wall—he had to build a people that would once again stand on their own as God led them. Putting some "backbone" back into the people was a large part of what Nehemiah had to accomplish—even if it required him to be harsh with them at times.¹

God has called each of us to important tasks, both as leaders and as followers. Reading Nehemiah will help us to have the courage we need to follow through even in the face of difficulty and persecution. May the Lord use this book to repair, in His strength, broken "walls" in our lives and strengthen our resolve to live by resilient and resolute faith.

¹ LifeGuide Bible Studies - LifeGuide Bible Studies – Nehemiah: The Courage to Face Opposition.