

Foundations Devotional

• FOR THE WEEK OF FEB 14 - FEB 20 •

MONDAY // NEHEMIAH 7-8

Nehemiah 7-8 describes the steps the people took after building the wall. The wall was necessary, but Jerusalem would not remain safe without people. In Nehemiah 8, we read that after the people were settled, they devoted a day to hear the Word of God read to them from Ezra—a practice that was important because the people did not have prior access to Scripture. Today, reading God's Word should be taken just as seriously. Through Scripture, God reveals who He is and what obedience to Him looks like. Scripture also provides countless stories of people who have gone before us in faith and how God has proven faithful to His people time and again. The most important thing we learn through Scripture, though, is the one big story it tells—the story of God's work to redeem His people and draw them back to Him, which He accomplishes through the death, resurrection, and final victory of Jesus.

TUESDAY // NEHEMIAH 9

As the Israelites heard the Word of God read to them, they were reminded of God's faithfulness to His people and His plans, but they were also reminded of their unfaithfulness to Him. The sins of their ancestors were responsible for God's judgment against Jerusalem, which is what landed them in exile and necessitated the reconstruction of the city to begin with. Among the things Ezra's reading brought to light was the need for confession and repentance. Jesus once said, "Unless you repent, you will all perish as well" (Luke 13:3, 5). Repentance can be defined as a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of that sin, and a sincere commitment to turn from it and walk in obedience to Christ. Even as Christians, we often choose paths that lead us away from the Lord. We must accept responsibility for wandering away from God. No matter how badly we have stumbled in sin, the Lord lovingly invites us to return to Him. We cannot truly worship the Lord until we receive His forgiveness for the sin separating us from Him.

WEDNESDAY // NEHEMIAH 10

Nehemiah 9 involved a time of worship and confession, and it ended by mentioning a covenant the people made with God in light of His provisions and their repentance. The people's covenant with God expressed their commitment to living in obedience to Him and His laws. After renewing their commitment to obey God and His laws, chapter 10 includes several specific promises the people made to show how they would live out this commitment in daily life. The promises, which cover everything from Sabbath practices to sacrifice rituals to tithing, reinforce the idea that God has set apart the Israelites to be His chosen people, and as such, they are to live holy and set-apart lives for Him. The goal is that they would be a witness to their community of the power and holiness of the one true God. Similarly, God calls us to live holy and set-apart lives, which we do when we live in obedience to Him, pursue Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us. As God's chosen people today, we are to continue to live as a light for Him in our dark and broken world.

THURSDAY // NEHEMIAH 11

After the work of rebuilding the wall, God called certain people to relocate to Jerusalem and serve Him there. This was not necessarily the most desirable place to be. For most people, it meant relocating their families from the surrounding villages and uprooting their lives. Nehemiah instructed the people to cast lots to determine which families should go. Nehemiah 11 teaches that where you live and work matters to God. He has placed His people in specific places around specific people in order to serve Him uniquely. In his letter to the Colossian believers, Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:23). This verse reminds us that, for the Christian, all of life is about glorifying God and serving Him—there should be no difference in your secular duty and your sacred duty. Our attitude toward work makes a great deal of difference. As Christians, we can and should add an eternal perspective to our viewpoint. We know our ultimate reward for a job well done will come from the Lord.

FRIDAY // NEHEMIAH 12

The completion of the wall and the repopulation of the city were celebrated with a dedication of the wall. This included singing, ritual purification, and a procession around the wall led by Nehemiah. The people recognized that their ability to rebuild the wall so quickly amid such opposition was possible only because of the Lord. So they worshiped Him with songs of thanksgiving and praise. The climax of the celebration was the presentation of offerings to Him. We live in a culture that values individualism and a "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality, which hinders us from acknowledging that even our best efforts and accomplishments are the result of God's blessing and provision in our lives. Every gift, talent, and opportunity you have is a result of God's desire to be glorified through your life, which He knows will alone lead to your greatest fulfillment and joy. Think about your offerings—everything from your monetary tithe to the way you spend your talents and time. Are you living like God is the source of everything you have? If not, it's time for a change.

WEEKEND // FINISH UP ANY YOU DIDN'T DO