

Can one man (woman) make a difference?

Do you think that whatever obstacle stands before you is just too big, too overwhelming to overcome?

Who are you to even think that you can accomplish the task before you, so why even try? You might as well just give up.

That is exactly what Satan wants you to do - Give up! Nehemiah is going to show you that no matter what is confronting you, no matter what Satan throws at you, you are going to be victorious if you tackle the problem head-on in God's strength. *"Greater is He that is in you, than he who is in the world."* - 1 John 4:4. *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* - Philippians 4:13

DAY ONE

You are about to embark on a study on the life of Nehemiah. He lived at a unique time in Israel's history. As you seek to know Nehemiah and what made this man so unique, it is important to start each day in prayer. In an inductive Bible study, you always begin with the Bible, allowing it to speak for itself. Since this is God's Word to you, you need to seek His Spirit to give you wisdom and understanding.

In order to do that, you are going to have a grasp of the book you are reading. In a shorter book, you would read through the book several times to look for the purpose of the book, find key words, see how the book is put together, how all the parts fit together. In a longer book like Nehemiah, we will approach this a little differently.

You will find the book of Nehemiah typed out with plenty of space to mark and jot some notes. These are called your Observation Worksheets. These are worksheets! Please use them as such. Mark them up; make notes on them. That is how you will learn! Along with the book of Nehemiah, there are some charts, maps, and other useful information to help you understand Nehemiah more completely.

Are you ready to begin? Then let's dig in.

1. Remember that you are learning to handle God's Word accurately, as a workman that needs not be ashamed - II Timothy 2:15. Every word is God breathed (II Timothy 3:16), so every word is important and has been placed there for a purpose. Remember that when we get into sections of the book that may be difficult to wade through.

2. The first thing that you want to do is identify the type of literature you are reading. Read Nehemiah 1 to familiarize yourself with how the book begins. Use your Observation Worksheets to do this. When you are finished reading chapter 1, write down the type of literature you think it is. Is it history, poetry, wisdom, prophecy?

3. Nehemiah is part of the Old Testament of the Bible. The Old Testament is broken down into the Law, History, Poetry, and Prophecy. Nehemiah is part of the historical section. Whenever you study a history, you always look for people, places, timing, events and how those events turned out. These are always key when you study History. You find these things by asking the 5 W's and H questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. As you read through Nehemiah 1 again, ask these questions as you read. As you do, you'll will discover the main person or people, the setting and the purpose of the book. Record what you learn below.

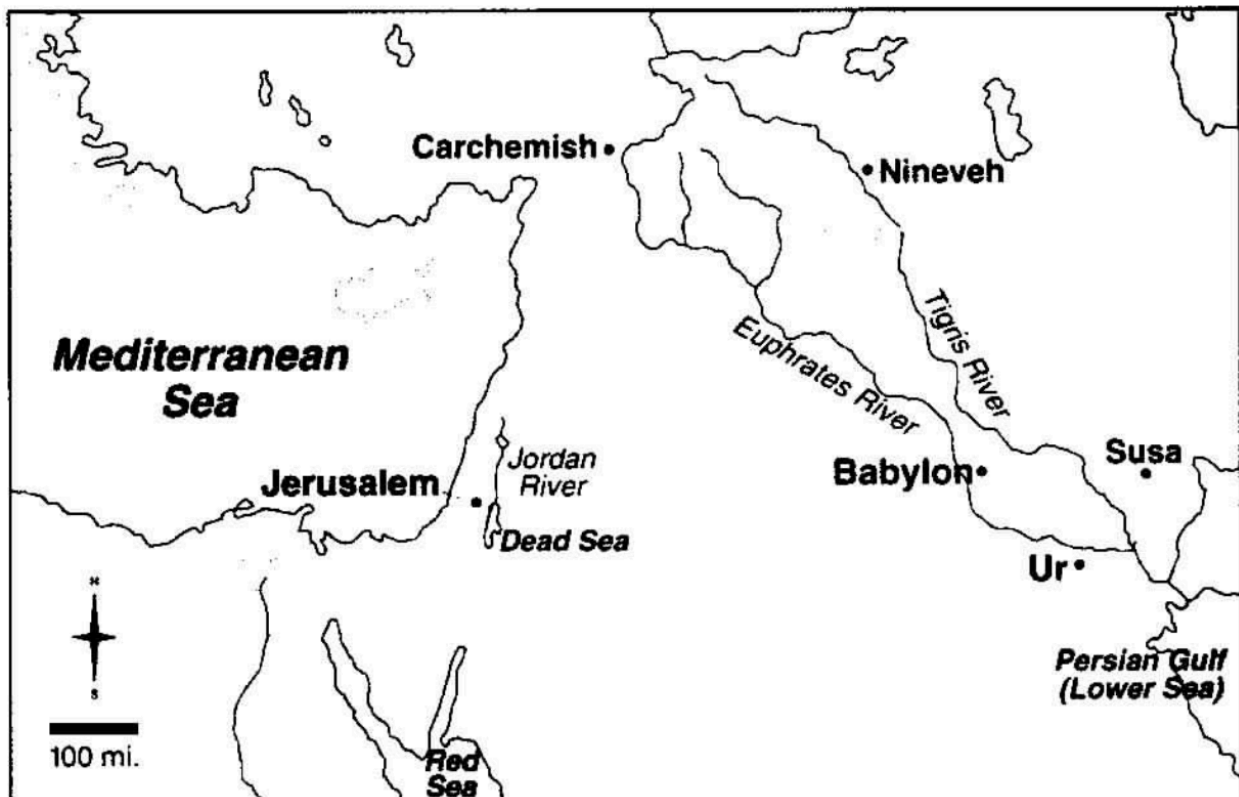
4. One of the best ways to acquire information is to begin marking key words and phrases. You have discovered the **who** in chapter 1. Nehemiah is your focus.
 - a. Using your Observation Worksheets (Nehemiah printed out for you as part of this book) or your Bible, find out all you can about him. You are going to do this by taking a colored pencil (pen, or marker) and marking every occurrence of his name in a special way. For example, you may choose to underline his name in blue or circle it in red - whatever works for you. Include pronouns such as "me, my, I" as well as synonyms like "your servant."
 - b. After marking all the references to Nehemiah in chapter 1, go back and look at what you have marked and make a list of what you learn about Nehemiah, the man. You will find worksheets to record this information entitled "Nehemiah the Man" in the Observation Worksheets on pages 43-44. Recording this information will help you to retain what you learn.

5. Now take some time to apply what you have learned. Is there anything that you can learn from Nehemiah that you can apply to your own life? Let me give you some examples.
 - a. Nehemiah was grieved because of the state of his people and the destruction of the city. Are there situations or broken things in your life, your family, workplace, community, church, nation? Does it grieve your heart? Write them down and take them to the Lord.
 - b. How did Nehemiah handle his adversity? Look over your list and see what you recorded. Is there anything you can learn from him and how he handled a heartbreaking situation?
 - c. Now it's time to ask yourself a difficult question. Are you willing to follow Nehemiah's example? Are you willing to pour out your heart to God in prayer and fasting, confessing and renouncing YOUR sin, repenting, and then living in the light of His Word?

Spend some time taking to the Lord about what you have learned today.

DAY TWO

1. Yesterday, you spent some time on the **“who”** of Nehemiah. Today we are going to look at the other 5 W’s and H. By doing this we are digging deeper into this first chapter.
2. **“When”** is Nehemiah 1 happening? When looking for time references, I put a blue clock over top of each time reference. Look for words like *then* and *after* or words that refer to months or years of someone’s reign. Read through chapter 1 and mark these words and then record what you learn.
3. **“Where”** helps us pinpoint the location of these events. Look for towns, cities, or areas mentioned. Words like *where* or *here* can also be place indicators. Read through Nehemiah 1 and mark any mention of locations. I use green and draw a compass above the word. You could also underline the word twice in green. Notice that you are using a different color than your other markings. This helps the words to stand out. Once you have read through this chapter and marked the *“where”* words, locate the places mentioned on the map below.



- a. Where is Nehemiah in this chapter?
 - b. Where did Nehemiah's brother and the men come from?
4. **"What"** is happening in chapter 1? What is the situation in Jerusalem?
 5. **"How"** does Nehemiah respond to the news brought to him about Jerusalem? Where does he turn and what does he do?
 6. There is one more important word/phrase that falls into our **"Who"** category that we are going to take a look at and that is God. God is always key, after all, it is His book! At times, it can be overwhelming to mark every reference to God; however, it should be easy to do this in chapter one. I use a purple triangle to mark God. Purple for royalty, and the triangle to represent the triune God. Read through Nehemiah 1 and mark the references to God, including pronouns and synonyms.
 7. Now take the time to go back through this chapter and on a separate piece of paper, make a list of everything you learn about God from this chapter. Make sure to include chapter and verse. You will continue to use this paper throughout your study.
 8. One more assignment and then we will call it a day. As you read through Nehemiah, did you see any key repeated words or phrases? Words are repeated which are key to understanding the meaning of the text which is why they are called "key words." Let's get you started and then you can go from there, so begin by reading through all the instructions first, and then do them.

- a. Mark each key word in a distinct color and way. Underline, circle the word, put it in a box, or draw a little symbol. Whatever is simple. This will slow you down, make you think, and help the words stand out to you when you come back to study them.
- b. If you did not see this, *prayer* and *sin* are key words in this chapter. You want to mark these two in different colors and different ways. Make sure to include synonyms of the words as well. For example the author may use phrases like “*said*” in verse 5 in place of *prayer* and a phrase like “*acted very corruptly*” in verse 7 for the word *sin*.
- c. In the margins of your Observation Worksheets, there is room to make a list of what you learn about sin and prayer. I would write the word “prayer” and underline that in the same color that I used to mark it in the text. I would then list what I learned about prayer (including the verse in which I found it). You want to do this for all your key words throughout your study. If you find the space too confining, you can use a piece of paper to keep your lists on instead. There are benefits to doing it both ways. Just make sure you do it.
- d. As you read through this chapter marking these two words, did you notice who was being prayed for and why?
- e. Mark these people as a key word, including pronouns, then list what you learn about these people. Again you can make your list on your worksheet or do it in the space below.
- f. Did Nehemiah pray for himself? If so, what did he pray and what did he mean by it?
- g. Are there any other key words that you observed in Nehemiah 1? If so, go back and mark them and follow the same steps as you did for *prayer* and *sin*.
9. That brings you to the end of today’s study. Take some time to reflect on what you have learned and what you can apply to your life. Ask God to help you take this knowledge from your head and allow it to become part of your life and the way that you live each day.

DAY THREE

You are going to spend one more day in the first chapter of Nehemiah. This is the foundation of the book so it is important to get all the information you can from this chapter. The more you know God's Word, the more your mind can be transformed and you can be more like Him (Romans 12:2; II Timothy 2:15). God's Word should be the rock upon which we build.

1. Remember to begin each day in prayer and ask that God would open your mind to hear His words to you.
2. Today, read through Nehemiah 1, out loud. By doing this, it causes your mind to be more engaged and allows the Scripture to speak to your heart. Unfortunately, when you read silently, your mind has a tendency to drift.
3. After reading chapter 1, review the lists that you made yesterday. Is there anything else you would like to add to them?
4. Nehemiah asked the Lord to be attentive to his prayer and remember the "word" the Lord commanded them. You need to understand what that "word" was. So what was Nehemiah referring to? He would have been going back to the first five books known as the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). These set down the terms of the covenant the nation of Israel entered into with God. God stands by His Word and that is what Nehemiah is asking God to do - stand by his Word.
 - a. Deuteronomy is the last book of the Law. God, through Moses, speaks to the people as they are about to enter the promised land of the covenant. Moses goes over all that God has done, and at the end, reminds the people of the blessings of obedience and the cursing that will come for disobedience. This is the covenant of the Law. This covenant is mentioned in Nehemiah 1:5. A covenant is a solemn binding agreement and it is pivotal in a relationship with God. Because of the importance of this, mark this word as a key word. I draw a red line above and below to represent passing between the bloody pieces of the covenant sacrificed.
 - b. Deuteronomy 28 and 29 reviews the blessings and curses. When you get to chapter 30, God speaks promises to the people. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-5 and record the main things God promises.

5. Now let's look into the historical setting of Nehemiah. The nation of Israel turned their back on the covenant of God and chased after the gods of the foreign nations that surrounded them. Because of this sin, God kept his promise of bring curses upon the people for their disobedience. Prophet after prophet came to address this sin and called the people to repent. They didn't which resulted in them being driven from the land and being taken captive by surrounding nations - Assyria first and then Babylon. This is the sin that Nehemiah addresses in his prayer.
 - a. Read II Chronicles 36:15-21. List the things that happened to the people and to the city. Notice who captured Jerusalem and what happened to the parts of the city which caused Nehemiah to grieve in Nehemiah 1:3.
 - b. Compare Nehemiah 1:1 with Nehemiah 2:1 to see whose twentieth year 1:1 is referring to. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC and this king's twentieth year 445 BC, how long have the walls been down? Why were they down for so long and what was it going to take to rebuild them?
 - c. Israel was in captivity for 70 years. Babylon was eventually conquered by the Medes and Persians. You can see Babylon's fall in Daniel 5. Now read II Chronicles 36:22-23 and record what you learn from these verses.
6. The book of Ezra chronologically follows Chronicles, and Nehemiah follows Ezra. At one time Nehemiah was part of Ezra. Read Ezra 1 and list the main events of the chapter. Make sure to watch for what Cyrus tells them to rebuild.

7. There is a timeline on pages 47-52 of your Observation Worksheets. This timeline focuses around the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Take time to look at it carefully and answer the following questions.
 - a. When did they start rebuilding the temple?
 - b. When did they stop rebuilding the temple, even though it wasn't completed?
 - c. When did they resume the work on the temple?
 - d. When did they finish?
 - e. According to the chart what book of the Bible records the temple construction? (Note the historical books are attached to the bottom of the timeline. The books at the bottom in purple are prophets.)
 - f. When does the book of Ezra end and the book of Nehemiah begin?
 - g. Ezra is about rebuilding the temple, what is Nehemiah's concern that caused him to mourn, weep, fast, and pray?
8. Now it is time to learn about the importance of city walls. Look at the following verses and note what you learn about them.
 - a. Joshua 6:5, 20
 - b. II Samuel 11:18-24
 - c. II Samuel 18:24-26; Ezekiel 33:1-6
 - d. I Kings 3:1

9. After reading these passages, Do you better understand Nehemiah's sorrow over the condition of the walls and the reproach of the people? What was the importance of walls in Nehemiah's day? What happened to nations without walls?
10. You don't live in that culture, but can see any parallels to your life today?
11. Why was Jerusalem in such a state? What have you learned from marking sin?
12. Take a look at your nation. Do you see any parallels? Are some of the issues of the day a result of their relationship to God? Is He judging or about to judge the sins of the nation? Explain your thoughts.
13. What can you, one individual, do about it? Learn from the life of Nehemiah!

DAY FOUR

1. Begin today by reading through Nehemiah one more time, but this time you are going to read it paragraph by paragraph.
 - a. Read Nehemiah 1:1-3 aloud. You will notice that there is a line after verse three. This indicates the end of a paragraph. Verse one and verse four are both in bold print. These are the first verses of a new paragraph. Summarize these three verses and write a summary of these three verses vertically between verse one and three.
 - b. Do the same thing for verses 4-11.
 - c. Now you are ready to summarize the chapter in as few of words as possible. Use words from the text if possible. Write this as your chapter title at the top of the page of Nehemiah 1. Use pencil because you may decide to change it later.
 - d. Now record your chapter title on your Observation Worksheets entitled "Nehemiah at a Glance" chart. This can be found on page OWS 45. This chart will help you be able to better see the flow of the book of Nehemiah.
2. Now read Nehemiah 2. Remember that Nehemiah is a historical book and history involves people.
 - a. One of the goals in studying the book of Nehemiah is to see what just one person can do. Read through chapter two again and mark all references to Nehemiah (pronouns and synonyms) just as you marked him in chapter one.
 - b. Record what you learn about Nehemiah on the list "Nehemiah the Man" on pages OWS 43-44.
 - c. Write down your first impressions of chapter two.
3. Now look at little deeper at chapter two which means that you are going to look for key words in this chapter. Pick a unique color and symbol combination for each word.
 - a. *Jerusalem* and *city* (if referring to Jerusalem)
 - b. *Wall* (go back and mark it in Nehemiah 1:3 as well)
 - c. *Temple* (*house of God*)
 - d. *Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem* - mark each differently, you will see them again
 - e. *build and rebuilding*

DAY FIVE

1. Read Nehemiah 2 aloud.
2. Now go through and look at the key words that you marked yesterday. Did you miss any? Go back now and mark them if you did. Also read through and mark any of the words that you marked in chapter one. Mark them in the same way throughout the book. Then as you did with chapter one, you are going to make a list about what you learn about each word.
3. Read through Nehemiah 2:1-8. Picture what is happening. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer - a mere servant. As a servant of the king, no one was to be sad or depressed in the presence of the king for nothing was to upset the king!
4. Summarize this paragraph and write the summary on the Observation Worksheet as you did for chapter one.
 - a. As part of the 5 W's and an H, the **when** question is very important. Since timing is included in this passage, we need to understand why. Start by comparing Nehemiah 2:1 with 1:1. How do these two compare?
 - b. There is a chart of the Jewish calendar on OWS 53. You may want to refer to this page to have a better understanding of the time period that this is happening. Record the difference in the time period between the first chapter and this one.
 - c. Do the events in Nehemiah 2:1-8 give you any insights on the following? If so, record what you learn.
 - 1) Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1?
 - 2) God?
 - 3) Nehemiah?

5. Did you notice that Nehemiah was “very much afraid” when the king asked him why he was sad? Look again at your timeline and note the years. King Artaxerxes reigned from 463-423 BC. The twentieth year would be 445 BC. Ezra speaks of the decree of Artaxerxes that was issued before Nehemiah’s request to the king.
 - a. Read Ezra 4:7-23. Note what happens and why.
 - b. If Nehemiah knew about this decree, do you think that would have caused fear and trepidation on his part? Why?
 - c. Go back to Nehemiah 2:1-8. What was the significance of the conversation in the throne room? Think about what transpired there. Is there anything that you can learn and apply to your own life from these verses?
 - d. Now read Proverbs 21:1. Do you believe these words? How do they apply to Nehemiah? How do they relate to you?
 - e. Read through Ezra 7:6-28. This tells about what happened to Ezra in the seventh month of the reign of King Artaxerxes. If Nehemiah knew what happened, do you think it would have been an encouragement to him? When you see how the Lord intervenes in other’s lives when they are courageous enough to step up, does it empower you to step up in difficult situations for the sake of God’s Kingdom?
 - f. List the similarities between Ezra 7:6-28 and Nehemiah 1-2.

6. Summarize what happens in the following verses and write a summary statement on your Observation Worksheets.
 - a. Nehemiah 2:1-8
 - b. Nehemiah 2:9-10 - note the three men who come on to the scene. You will see them show up again in Nehemiah's life.
 - c. Nehemiah 2:11-16 - What did Nehemiah do and why?
 - d. Nehemiah 2:17-20 - What is happening and how does Nehemiah handle it?
7. Record a theme for Nehemiah 2 and record it on your At A Glance Chart and on the theme line in your Observation Worksheets for chapter two.
8. Record any observations about Nehemiah the Man on your Observation Worksheets, making sure to include chapter and verse.
9. Any applications you can make to your own life? Truths that you can incorporate into your own life? Principles that can be applied for more godly living? Inspiration for how to handle difficult times in your life?
10. Feel free to consult commentaries at this time, but only for chapters one and two.