

# LIFE GROUP LESSON

Prayer on the Run • Week of September 15

When Nehemiah leaves his post as cupbearer to Persian King Artaxerxes, he travels some 1100+ miles to do a great work God placed before him – rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (866 direct miles from Susa to Jerusalem, across the Arabian desert). How far are you willing to go to do God’s work, to live so that thousands of people can experience God personally and regain their true identity in the Lord?

Like Nehemiah, fighting for the people we love is often difficult and barren. Doing a ‘good work’ may take us through vicious lies and feelings of abandonment. Once Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, before telling anyone his reason for being there, he slips out in the night and personally inspects the broken walls and burned gates (Nehemiah 2:12-16). He has his work cut out for him – not just the task of rebuilding but navigating through enemy plots (Nehemiah 2:10,19, 4:1-3,7-9, 11-12, 6:1-9,10-13,19b). After explaining his mission to fellow Jewish leaders who are eager to begin the good work, opposition immediately follows.

Read Nehemiah 4:1-14

It is often as we are trying to do the right thing and live into God’s call, that desert storms hit. Followers-of-Christ are not exempt from wilderness experiences. The Bible is replete with devoted, God-fearing individuals attempting to do God’s work while feeling deserted and forgotten, even by God. During seasons of suffering, when the Enemy seems to be mocking everything we believe about God, we can actually become stronger in our faith. But we must rely on God and not ourselves. We must choose (like Nehemiah) to press in, not give up.

1. The endeavor of *everyone* repairing the wall where they lived, worked, and owned businesses allowed the returned exiles to take ownership of the mission. They were motivated to build strong. When has a greater mission motivated you to stay strong for your marriage, children, church family, a friend, or perhaps a co-worker?

Did a desert experience accompany your mission? What did you learn through that?

Sometimes it seems as though God withdraws from us when we experience barren seasons. We hear whispers of doubt, shouts of threat, or slanderous remarks and outright lies. But God is always present with us. He sees it all. Yet, there may be times when the Lord ‘withdraws’ from us in order to test our hearts (see 2 Chronicles 32:31). What is in your heart?

2. Often, we criticize the ones who call out the best in us. It is not that we do not like change, we just don’t like *changing*. When have you caught yourself criticizing a leader (pastor, boss, coach, friend) because they saw *better* in you, but you did not want to change? What did you learn about yourself?

When have you been criticized for calling out the best in another individual? How did you respond in that situation?

Barren places can bring out the worst in us (and others) initially, but if we hang on, the goodness of God will begin to surface. The important thing is: don’t give up. Keep moving forward – praying, seeking the Lord’s direction, believing and hoping for the best.

People may (and probably will) disappoint us, but like David, find your encouragement in the Lord (see 1 Samuel 30:6). After the tremendous suffering that Job went through, he spoke these profound words: “I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes” (Job 42:5). It may be that your wilderness brings you straight to the face of Christ.

3. Has there been a time when people have tried to console you with — “God is good. He will never leave you. Everything happens for a reason...” and you were too numb to receive it? True in your head, but distant in your heart? Read the excerpt below:

“But these theological niceties are of little help to us when we enter the Sahara of the heart. Here we experience real spiritual desolation. We feel abandoned by friends, spouse, and God... With the Psalmist we cry out, ‘I call all day, my God, but you never answer’ (Ps. 22:2). In fact, we begin to wonder if there is a God to answer.” (Prayer by Richard Foster, p.18)

4. If you (or someone you love) is in a desert today, Jesus really does know your struggle. He has been there and He is with you now. “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed” (Psalm 34:18). The Father still welcomes you, and He will never stop loving you. So Pray – even if it is a *Prayer-on-the-Run*. Pray!

“If the key is prayer, the door is Jesus Christ. How good of God to provide us a way into His heart. He knows that we are stiff-necked and hard-hearted, so He has provided a means of entrance. Jesus, the Christ, lived a perfect life, died in our place, and rose victorious over all the dark powers so that we might live through Him. This is wonderfully good news. No longer do we have to stand outside, barred from nearness to God by our rebellion. We may now enter through the door of God’s grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.” (Prayer, pp.2-3)

**One Year Bible Reading**

Sept. 15: Isaiah 19:1-21:17, Galatians 2:1-16, Psalm 59:1-17, Proverbs 23:13-14  
 Sept. 16: Isaiah 22:1-24:23, Galatians 2:17-3:9, Psalm 60:1-12, Proverbs 23:15-16  
 Sept. 17: Isaiah 25:1-28:13, Galatians 3:10-22, Psalm 61:1-8, Proverbs 23:17-18  
 Sept. 18: Isaiah 28:14-30:11, Galatians 3:23-4:31, Psalm 62:1-12, Prov. 23:19-21  
 Sept. 19: Isaiah 30:12-33:9, Galatians 5:1-12, Psalm 63:1-11, Proverbs 23:22  
 Sept. 20: Isaiah 33:10-36:22, Galatians 5:13-26, Psalm 64:1-10, Proverbs 23:23  
 Sept. 21: Isaiah 37:1-38:22, Galatians 6:1-18, Psalm 65:1-13, Proverbs 23:24



**Text: Nehemiah 4:1-14**

**PLAIN TRUTH:**

\_\_\_\_\_ often births \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Nehemiah’s vision came from Israel’s \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Nehemiah knew we could choose to be \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Nehemiah’s prayers equipped him to be \_\_\_\_\_ instead of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Nehemiah knew when you bear fruit others will be \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Nehemiah refreshed the vision that when we repair the - \_\_\_\_\_ God \_\_\_\_\_ us in the struggle.
6. What stands between your success or failure is your \_\_\_\_\_.