

Student Suppers Term 3 2019-20 (Nehemiah)

A reminder of the structure of Nehemiah:

Ch 1-6:15	<u>Return, Rebuild, Restore (City)</u>	Nehemiah
1-2	Return of Nehemiah	
3-6:15	Rebuilding Wall (under opposition)	
Ch 6:16-13:31	<u>Restore and Reform (People)</u>	Ezra/Nehemiah
7	Restoring Community	
8-10	Renewing Covenant	
11-12	Rejoicing at Renewal	(Climax)
Ch 13	Reformation Still Required	(Anti-climax)

Although many have presented Nehemiah as though it were a manual in leadership or even building programs(!) the focus is clearly on more than the building of the walls. Otherwise the book would finish with chapter 6!!

Nehemiah's focus is the same as Ezra (surprise!):

The restoration of God's people as a worshipping community, for God's glory

Nehemiah 1: Prayerful Restoration

Nehemiah opens in 445 BC. It is 13 years since Ezra returned (Ezra 7), ~90 years since Zerubbabel returned and Cyrus' edict (Ezra 1), 140 years since the destruction of Jerusalem.

1:1-4 Prayerful Response

- Nehemiah receives word that Jerusalem is a mess and God's people living in shame.
- He is devastated. Why? It's 140 year old news!
 - o The Background is Ezra 4:6-23. The re-building *of the walls* has stalled.
 - o God takes this old news and drives it home in Nehemiah's heart in a new way
- Response: Patient mourning, fasting, prayer.
 - o Identifies with God's people and recognises their shame is his shame
 - o Identifies with God and recognises his people's shame reflects on God.
 - o *Nehemiah's actions throughout the book reflect a deep passion for God's glory*

1:5-11 Responsive Prayer

- Another amazing prayer (after Ezra 9). Nehemiah is driven by who God is:
 1. Sovereign (v5)
 2. Powerful (v5)
 3. Attentive to his people (v6, v11)
 4. Faithful to his promises (v5, v8-9)
 5. Disciplines his people (v7-9)
 6. Responds to repentance (v8-9)
 7. Restores his people (v9)
 8. Concerned for the reputation of his own name (v10-11)

Suggested Questions

- What is the situation Nehemiah is responding to (review Ezra 4)
- Why does Nehemiah respond to the news as he does?
- How is Nehemiah's prayer driven by who he know God is?
- How do we respond when God's people are marginalised?
- What can we do to cultivate a deeper passion for God's glory?