

STUDY OF NEHEMIAH

LESSON # 1

(The importance of good role models)

As we begin our study it is important to remember that the text of Scripture is inspired, our comments about it are not. Thus, it needs to be constantly emphasized that every student needs to read directly from the Bible and allow the Holy Spirit to speak directly through His inspired Word.

OVERVIEW OF LESSON

Much of what we learn in life we learn by imitating those around us. Many years ago a young man was discovered in the wilderness who had been raised by wolves. Not surprisingly, he walked on all fours and made sounds like the animals around him. Little children invariably learn the language spoken by their parents. If the parents speak English, the children will learn to speak English. If the parents speak Russian, Chinese, or Spanish, then the children learn to imitate those sounds. You can see that everyone, especially children, need a good role model.

Note these Scriptures:

- **Jesus** left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). When He washed the feet of His disciples, it was to give them an example (Jn. 13:15).
- **The prophets** are an example of suffering affliction (Ja. 5:10).
- **Paul** wanted his life and ministry to be a good example for all believers (Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9).
- **Timothy** was to be a good example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Tim 4:12).
- **You and I** certainly need to be good examples also. No man lives to himself, or dies to himself (Rom. 14:7). Everyone has influence.

MAY THIS STUDY ENCOURAGE YOU TO BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL!

All Scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16). No man has the right, however, to tell God exactly how and what He can teach you from His inspired word.

So, the emphasis we are making is only one truth of many we can take from today's lesson. Perhaps it will encourage us to monitor more closely the TV programs, movies, and music our children are exposed to. We can determine to replace bad role models with good ones. Certainly, we can be a good example ourselves. David said that he would set no wicked or vile thing before his eyes (Ps. 101:3). Just as doctors do their best to protect a patient from deadly infections, we can purge our homes and lives from harmful and degrading influences.

AS WE HAVE READY SAID NEHEMIAH IS A GOOD EXAMPLE, AND HERO FOR US ALL!

NEGATIVE ROLE MODELS ARE TO BE AVOIDED

- In the days before the flood, the “men of renown” who were the heroes of the day, were men whose thoughts were only evil continually. Their influence so dominated the world that God decided to destroy all mankind with a flood.
- Mohammed, as you know, was a 7th century prophet who was the founder of Islam. He was a ruthless warrior who killed men and made slaves of women and children. He married at least 11 women in 14 years . Ayesha, his favorite wife, was only 6 years old. We should not be surprised that the man who was the primary architect of the September 11th attacks was named “Khalid Sheikh Mohammed”. He bragged about killing Daniel Pearl with these infamous words: “I decapitated with my blessed right hand the head of the American Jew Daniel Pearl in the city of Karachi, Pakistan. For those who would like to confirm, there are pictures of me on the Internet holding his head.” It ought to be a source of concern that millions of young men all over the world are named “Mohammed”.
- In the Islamic world suicide bombers are considered such heroes that there are literally hundreds, and perhaps thousands of young men, who want to follow their example.
- Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris chose April 20, 1999 to murder their classmates at the Columbine School because it was the 110th anniversary of the birthday of Adolph Hitler.
- Ernesto "Che" Guevara was a close friend of Fidel Castro, and also a Marxist murderer and revolutionary. Go to any college campus or hip hangout and you'll find no shortage of Che T-shirts, Che posters, and even Che cell phone messages.
- "Wilt" Chamberlain was a famous basketball player. Though he was a life long bachelor he claimed to have had sex with 20,000 different women. What a horrible legacy he has left for those who consider him a hero.
- Marilyn Monroe killed herself in 1962. Loren Coleman, in his book *Mysterious America*, points out that due to the extensive coverage of her death “the suicide rate in the United States increased briefly by 1,296”. In his book *The Copycat Effect* he points out that Copycats follow a regular temporal pattern . . . they imitate previous violent attacks, oftentimes down to specific details . . . and that "Celebrity" events have a far-reaching impact . . .”

QUESTIONS

- What can we do to protect society from negative role models?
- What can we do to protect our family from negative role models?
- What can we do to protect ourselves from negative role models?
- Do you know of someone whose has had problems because of a negative role model?
- Have you had problems in your own life because of a negative role model?
- “Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." (1 Cor 15:33) Please comment.
- What radio and TV programs can you recommend as being helpful?
- What newspapers or magazines can you recommend for others?
- What personal friends do you have that are most helpful?
- How can you help your family and friends to learn about Bible heroes like Nehemiah?
- Is it possible for someone to be godly in the midst of ungodly people?

POSITIVE ROLE MODELS TO FOLLOW

- Jesus is our primary example. Peter wrote: “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Pet 2:21)
- The primary command of Christ to His disciples was “follow me”. It is found 77 times in the four Gospels.
- Paul wrote: “I urge you to imitate me” (1 Cor. 4:16). “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” (1 Cor 11:1)
- Biblical commands to parents:
 - Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord (Eph. 5:22).
 - Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Eph. 5:25).
 - “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” (Prov 22:6)
 - Parents were commanded to teach their children the laws of God (Deut. 6:1 - 9).
 - “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4)
- Timothy received godly training from his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).
- George Washington is known as the Father of our Country. His father died when he was only eleven, and his older brother, Lawrence, became a positive role model in his life. Lawrence was a ranking officer in the Virginia militia, taught George trigonometry, surveying, etc, and inspired him to military service.
 - Another early influence on George Washington was the powerful Fairfax family, who introduced him to the accomplishments and proprieties of mannered wealth.
 - Before the age of 16, Washington wrote out a list of 110 “Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation” That helped to shape his life.
 - Perhaps no other individual has had such a defining influence on America as George Washington.
- Thousands of young men like Abraham Lincoln, Dr. George Washington Carver, and a host of others have been inspired to greatness by the life of our First President.
- Today, however, there is a concerted effort to denigrate Washington and other American heroes. For example, in 1995 a tax funded book called *National Standards for U.S. History* was so critical of American Heroes that it was denounced by a vote of 99 - 1 by the U.S. Senate. In 2002 the New Jersey State Dept. of Education omitting all mention of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and others.

QUESTIONS

- Name someone in your family who has been a positive role model.
- Name someone in the church who has been a positive role model.
- Name a positive role model in sports, in government, on television, in the movies.
- Jesus advanced in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man (Lk. 2:52) How was He able to do this while surrounded by sinners?
- Why must elders be above reproach ? (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Why will teachers be judged more strictly? (James 3:1)
- What can parents do to create a positive environment for their children?
- How can we encourage our children to choose the right role models?
- Name a wise investment you have made for the welfare of your family.

WE CAN LEARN FROM NEHEMIAH HOW TO BE A BETTER EXAMPLE AND ROLE MODEL!

LESSON # 2

(God is calling everyone of His children to get involved!)

“No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.” (Mark 13:32-34)

(Read Nehemiah chapter 1)

OVERVIEW OF LESSON Isaiah wrote by inspiration: “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.” (Isa 46:9-10) This lesson will help us to see the things that happen on earth through the eyes of God. Remember, the things that we see are temporal. It is the unseen things that are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). **THIS LESSON CAN ALSO HELP YOU TO FOCUS ON YOUR OWN CALLING FROM GOD!**

Jesus was told the story of two men (Lk. 16:19 - 31). One was very rich, and one was very poor. It is important to remember that they both died. Even rich people die! In eternity, the poor man was being comforted by the angels and the rich man was being tormented. As the late Jim Elliott said: “He is no fool who gives up the things he cannot keep to get those things he cannot lose”.

BACKGROUND AND CHRONOLOGY

In the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah are considered as one book.

Chronology (approximate dates)

- 606 - 586 B.C. - Jerusalem besieged and defeated 3 times.
- (Seventy year captivity of Jews in Babylon).
- 536 B.C. - Decree of Cyrus ends captivity and Zerubbabel starts to rebuild Temple.
- 516 B.C. - Temple of Zerubabel dedicated.
- (Note - from 606 when the captivity began to 536 when it ended was 70 years. From 586 when the Temple was destroyed until 516 when it was rebuilt and dedicated was also 70 years. From the first invasion of Jerusalem until its complete destruction was 20 years. From the time they began to rebuilt the Temple until it was completed was also 20 years).
- 458 B.C. - Ezra returned to Jerusalem and brought about religious reform.
- 444 B.C. - Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem
- 444 B.C. - Walls of Jerusalem rebuilt in only 52 days (Neh. 6:15).

OVERVIEW OF WORLD HISTORY

- Before creation God was everything.
- With creation came rebellion.
- Ultimately, God is going to destroy all rebellion and again be everything.

Note: **“For he "has put everything under his feet". Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put**

everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.” (1 Cor 15:27-28)

JERUSALEM WAS A PART OF GOD’S ETERNAL STRATEGY

- Before the creation of the world God knew that Jesus would have to die (1 Pet. 1:18 - 20). And His death, as you know, was destined to take place in Jerusalem (Lk. 13:33).
- The unfolding of history is therefore according to God’s eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). See also Rom. 16:25 - 26; 1 Cor. 2:7 - 10; Eph. 3:2 ff.; Col. 1:26; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; etc.).
- The eternal plan of God involved a Messianic lineage that started with God, and proceeded through Adam all the way down to Joseph, Mary, and Christ. We are familiar with famous names like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but every person in the genealogy comprised an indispensable link with the Messiah.
- The integrity of this genealogy is confirmed by long lists in 1 Chron., Matt. 1, Lk. 3, and other passages of Scripture. This fact helps us to understand that the family records in Ezra and Nehemiah are not there by accident. This also helps us to understand why God placed in the heart of Nehemiah the desire to rebuild Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem is very important to God. Remember, it was in Jerusalem that God chose to put His name (Deut. 12:4 - 14). Christian worship is described as involving the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22). John, on the Isle of Patmos, received a vision of a “new Jerusalem” coming down out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:2). In the light of these facts the rebuilding of Jerusalem assumes an added significance.

PAGAN KINGS WERE USED BY GOD

There are, of course, thousands of individuals whom God has used to accomplish His eternal purpose in Christ. Our present study will involve three kings of Persia; Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.

- Cyrus was inspired by God to build a house for him in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1 - 2).
- Darius also protected and helped finance the building of the temple (Ezra 6:7 - 15).
- Artaxerxes also allowed and even helped finance the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1 - 9).

To help illustrate the Sovereignty of God in the lives of these kings, let us take a closer look at Cyrus, and the fascinating way that God orchestrated the events of his life.

The name Cyrus is the Latin form of the old Persian word “Kurush” and is applied to three prominent men in history.

- Cyrus I - the son of Teispes and grandfather of Cyrus the Great. He lived and reigned in the 7th century before Christ.
- Cyrus II - called Cyrus the Great. He reigned from 559 B.C. until his death in 530 B.C. **IT IS THIS CYRUS ABOUT WHOM WE ARE WRITING!**
- Cyrus the Younger -the son of the Persian King Darius II.

As we have said before, our present focus is on Cyrus the Great. He is the only Gentile King called the Lord’s “anointed” (Is. 45:1). Most children are only expected for 9 months, but Cyrus was expected some 200 years before he was born. Isaiah said of him: **“He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.” (Isa 44:28)** At this time, however, Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed!

Since both Cyrus and Jesus were called the Lord's anointed, and since both of them were expected long before they were born, we should not be surprised that the devil would try to kill both babies.

The primary threat to the baby Cyrus came from his wicked grandfather Astyages. He was the last king of the Median empire and was insanely jealous of anyone who would assume his throne. One night he had a terrifying dream that his daughter, Mandane, had a son who would do so. When her baby was born, he therefore ordered that it be killed.

The grisly task was assigned to Harpagus, a trusted servant of the wicked king. Harpagus had second thoughts about killing the baby for he reasoned the baby's mother would live longer than his grandfather and perhaps seek vengeance. He therefore determined that the baby had to die, but not by his hand. So he delegated the execution to a herdsman named Mitrdates. He was ordered to abandon the baby to the mountains and leave it to die.

The plot thickens! Mitrdates was married to a female slave named "Spaca" which incidentally means "bitch". This name, as we will later see, is significant. Providentially, at the very time baby Cyrus was born, Spaca gave birth to a stillborn son. Her husband merely switched the two babies. This enabled Spaca's dead son to have a royal burial, and the baby Cyrus to be spared execution.

Some ten years later Harpagus was to pay a terrible price for his disobedience. When the true identity of Cyrus was discovered, Harpagus was invited by the king to a banquet. After the meal Harpagus was presented a basket with the hands and head of his 13 year old son. It was only then that Harpagus realized he had just dined upon the flesh of his own child.

Now this cruel act gave Harpagus an unquenchable desire to make the old king suffer defeat. He skillfully spread the rumor that just as Romulus and Remus had been suckled by a she-wolf, Cyrus also was abandoned in the wilderness and raised by a "bitch". A civil war erupted, the wicked grandfather was defeated, and Cyrus became the King of the Medes and the Persians.

There are many other remarkable stories in the Scriptures about Cyrus. His conquest of Babylon, for example, was made possible because God opened the doors of Babylon before him (Is. 45:1). While we will not take time to relate that story here, suffice it to say that Cyrus was destined to do things for God before he was even born. This is why Ezra wrote: **"In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing: "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah." (Ezra 1:1-2)**

POINTS TO PONDER

- Cyrus was given a divine mission before he was even born.
- Jeremiah was also given a mission before he was born (Jer. 1:5).
- Paul also had a mission from his mother's womb (Gal. 1:15).
- Please read Ps. 139 and discuss whether the truth of this Psalm applied only to David, or to all of us?
- Is it possible that God has a plan for your life and is calling you into His service?

Abel was the first person on earth to experience physical death. He still speaks! (Heb. 11:4). Death does not end your influence. Even after you are dead you too will still speak! ARE YOU WILLING TO BE USED TO HELP BRING ABOUT THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD?

LESSON # 3

(God can help you make major decisions)

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” (James 1:5-8)

(Reread Nehemiah chapter 1 and then chapter 2:1 - 10)

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON - One benefit of this lesson will be to see what Nehemiah did before making a major decision in his life. Studying his example can also help us when we are faced with major decisions in our own life.

Your high school yearbook would be quite boring to someone who went to a different school, and did not know any of your friends. To you, however, the book is a treasure chest. Behind each smiling face is a wealth of interesting information. When we know something about Bible heroes, the Scriptures can also come alive. Individuals that once might have bored us, can also be a treasure chest of interesting information.

The book of Nehemiah begins with this words: **“The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa,” (Neh 1:1)** Both Nehemiah and his father, Hacaliah, have the Hebrew word “Yah” (Jehovah) in their names. This adds evidence to the fact that Nehemiah came from a family with strong religious convictions. Kislev is the Jewish month that corresponds to our November or December. It was the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes. Susa was a royal city and the favorite winter residence of Persian Kings.

- The next verses provide more insight into his family, and his character.
- His brother, Hanani, came to Susa as part of an official delegation from Judah. Evidently, they came from a prominent family.
 - Nehemiah wanted to know about the Jewish remnant and the conditions of Jerusalem.
 - When he heard about the trouble and disgrace of the people, and the terrible conditions of the city he sat down and wept, and mourned, fasted, and prayed for “some days”.

Remember! This lesson can help you make major decisions that will glorify God!

Here are some things that Nehemiah did in determining the will of God in his life.

- First, as we have already said, he wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed. (1:4).
- He prayed day and night (1:6)
- Next, he confessed the sins of the nation, his own personal sins, and the sins of his father’s house (1:6).
- He remembered the promise of God to scatter and return His people (1:8 - 9)
- He prayed four months before petitioning the king. He began praying in the month of Kislev, which, as we have said, corresponds to November or December (1:1). He made his petition in the month of Nisan, which corresponds to March or April (2:1).
- Initially he did not ask for anything, he merely went into the presence of the king with a sad

- countenance (2:1).
- When the king asked what was wrong, Nehemiah made specific requests which he had been thinking about for months.
 - He wanted to be sent to Jerusalem to rebuild it.
 - He wanted letters to the governor so he could have safe conduct.
 - He wanted a letter of authorization to get timber from the king's forest.
 - Because God was answering Nehemiah's prayer, the king granted these requests and also sent army officers and the cavalry with him.

WHY NEHEMIAH WAS AFRAID TO APPEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING WITH A SAD FACE!

Oriental despots expected to be "treated like a king". Even a favorite wife could be put to death for coming into his presence without a special invitation (see Esther 4:16). The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia states this about the king.

"This Artaxerxes was the third son of Xerxes and was raised to the throne by Artabanus, the murderer of Xerxes. Shortly after his accession, Artaxerxes put his older brother Darius to death; and a little later, Artabanus, who perhaps aimed to make himself king, was killed. Hystaspes, the second brother, who seems to have been satrap of Bactria at the time of his father's death, rebelled, and after two battles was deprived of his power and probably of his life. The reign of Artaxerxes was further disturbed by the revolt of Egypt in 460 BC, and by that of Syria about 448 BC"

Nehemiah was "cupbearer to the king" (1:11). The king suspected that somebody was trying to poison him, and would not eat or drink anything until it had been tasted by someone else.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How long did it take to get from Susa to Jerusalem? (See Ezra 7:8 - 9).
- Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. Why hadn't somebody rebuilt the walls before?
- Why should Nehemiah be called by God to rebuild Jerusalem when he was so far away, and others were so close?
- Did God really call him, or should he have waited on someone else?
- In the absence of direct revelation, how did God call him to the work?
- List some hardships Nehemiah had to experience to do this job.
- List some risks Nehemiah had to take in order to do this job.
- Would Nehemiah have ever been given permission to rebuild Jerusalem if he had not asked?
- In your opinion what is the greatest need in our church? Is there anything you can do to meet this need?
- In your opinion what is the greatest need in Christianity around the world. Is there anything you can do to meet this need?

YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD!

God knows your name. He not only knows where you live, but He even numbers the hairs on your head. Not one sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge and you are of more value than many sparrows. He is vitally interested in every decision you make!

LESSON # 4 WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS

(This lesson is to encourage everyone to work with governments in every way we can)

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” (Rom 13:1-2)

(Reread Nehemiah 2:1 - 10)

OVERVIEW OF LESSON - Governments exist in every country on earth. Christian workers need to be prepared to work with every government, in every way we can.

- Cyrus, the King of Persia, felt the call of God to build a temple for Him in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2)
- King Darius ordered that the cost of building the temple be paid by the royal treasury, and that the gold and silver articles taken from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar be returned (Ezra 6:4 - 5)
- King Artaxerxes wrote letters of authorization for Nehemiah, provided him with wood from the king's forest, and also sent army officers and cavalry with him (Neh. 2:7 - 9).
- King Nebuchadnezzar was forced to live like an animal because he refused to acknowledge that God rules over the kingdoms of men and appoints over them anyone he wishes (Dan. 4:24 - 27).
- Paul wrote: **“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:1-4)**
- Peter wrote: **“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.” (1 Pet 2:13-15)**

SOME GOVERNMENTS ARE ACTUALLY OPPOSED TO THE WORK OF GOD

- When this happens we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).
- No power, either earthly or spiritual, is capable of keeping God from accomplishing His eternal purpose. When the Roman Government conspired with the Jewish Government to kill Jesus and stop the spread of Christianity, it only caused God to laugh and hold them in derision (See Acts 4:23 - 31; Ps. 2:1 - 5).
- Persecution by governments has never stopped the growth of Christianity. In fact, it seems to only make the church purer and stronger.
- The Voice of the Martyrs states that there are 52 countries in the world where the Bible is illegal.
- Nina Shea has stated that there have been more martyrs for Christ in the last 100 years than in the previous 19 centuries.

Bill and Gloria Gaither published a song about “The Church Triumphant”. It states:

“Many a foolish conquer made the mistake of thinking that because he had forced the Church of Jesus Christ out of sight, that he had stilled its voice and snuffed out its life. God Has

Always Had A People! The powerful current of a rushing river is not diminished because it is forced to flow underground. The purest water is the stream that bursts crystal clear into the sunlight after it has fought its way through solid rock. There have been charlatans who like Simon the magician, sought to barter on the open market that power which cannot be bought or sold. But God Has Always Had A People! Men who could not be bought and women who were beyond purchase. Yes, God Has Always Had A People! There have been times of affluence and prosperity when the Church's message was nearly diluted into oblivion by those who sought to make it socially attractive, neatly organized and financially profitable. It has been gold plated, draped in purple and encrusted with jewels. It has been misrepresented, ridiculed, blotted and scorned. These followers of Jesus Christ have been according to the whim of the times elevated as sacred leaders and martyred as heretics. Yet through it all, there marches on that powerful army of the meek, God's chosen people that can't be bought, flattered, murdered or stilled. On through the ages they march. The Church, God's Church Triumphant, is Alive and Well! Now listen child of God. It's alive! Discouraged pastor it's His Church and it's alive! Lonely Missionary sow your seeds with confidence! It's alive my broken hearted friend! Old saint you're not alone and forgotten, the Church is alive! Busy mother cast your cares on Jesus! It's alive young student. You're not alone in serving the Lord! Faithful father there's rest in the Lord! The Church is alive! Cynical skeptic you haven't killed God with your noisy unbelief. He's Alive! So family of God raise you hands and praise the Lord. For the Church, God's Church Triumphant is Alive and Well!"

Here are the words of Napoleon, quoted in Henry Parry Liddon, Liddon's Bampton Lectures 1866 (London: Rivingtons, 1869), 148.

"Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him....Jesus Christ was more than man.... I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me.... but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lighted up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts.... Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man toward the unseen, that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others to satisfy; He asks for that which a philosopher may seek in vain at the hands of his friends, or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother. He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally; and forthwith His demand is granted . . ."

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- Would Nehemiah have been able to influence the king without being a part of his inner circle?
- Would the king have granted his request if Nehemiah had not asked?
- Why would God inspire men like Cyrus or Herod to build a temple in His honor?
- James A. Garfield was a Christian preacher and also president of the U.S. Which was more important?
- Is it wrong to ask earthly governments for money to do spiritual things?
- Do we have a better government now than we did 100 years ago? Explain your answer.
- Have you ever considered running for public office or taking a government job?
- How important is it for Christians to vote?
- If Nehemiah were your son, would you have wanted him to take the job of cupbearer?
- What can Christians do legally to influence elections?
- What can Christians legally do on public school grounds?

LESSON # 5
(An honest appraisal of needs)
(Read Nehemiah 2:11 - 18)

OVERVIEW OF LESSON - Good things happen when we are honest. Bad things happen when we are not. One benefit of this lesson involves being totally and completely honest.

Before doing any job, it is important to obtain an honest assessment of what needs to be done. After his long journey, Nehemiah rested three days, then selected a few men, and rode around Jerusalem inspecting the ruins of the once great city. Perhaps these few men were invited to provide technical information on what needed to be done, and maybe for security. The ruin was so complete that when he tried to approach the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool he had to turn around because there was not room for his mount to go through. Once the assessment was made, Nehemiah approached the officials of the city and challenged them to rebuild the walls. He shared with them his contacts with the king and the gracious help he had already received through the blessings conferred upon him by God.

Then the Scriptures note: **“They replied, ‘Let’s start rebuilding’, so they began this good work” (Neh. 2:18).**

NOTE! JERUSALEM WAS DESTROYED IN 586 B.C. AND NEHEMIAH ARRIVED IN 444 B.C. (142 YEARS HAD GONE BY). THESE PEOPLE KNEW THE TRUTH! MOST OF US DO TOO! CERTAINLY THEY MUST HAVE FELT BETTER ABOUT THEMSELVES WHEN THEY DETERMINED TO DO WHAT WAS RIGHT.

Here are a few lessons we can learn. Perhaps you will discover others.

1. The importance of complete honesty!

- Nehemiah merely stated the obvious. God has created us in such a way that truth harmonizes with our heart strings.
- Medical doctors and dentists do extensive testing before starting a procedure. The truth is their best ally.
- Successful recovery programs also insist upon complete honesty. Recovering addicts, for example, are taught to introduce themselves by saying: “My name is John Doe, I am an alcoholic and a drug addict”. Constantly facing the truth can be therapeutic.
- Counselors know that if a client does not face reality there is no hope for recovery.
- The Scriptures describe sinners as looking in the mirror and immediately forgetting what he looks like (James 1:22 - 24).
- David, a man after God’s own heart, obtained forgiveness and power because he was painfully honest about his own sin (see Ps. 51)
- When you are approaching a problem in your personal life, your family, your business, or your church, we must do what Nehemiah did. Gather facts and be completely honest.

2. The importance of prayer.

- Yes! The Jews responded quickly to the challenge of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls. Don’t forget that the Jews in Jerusalem were already in a state of “trouble and disgrace” (Neh.

1:3). And don't forget, also, that Nehemiah fasted and prayed for four months before even mentioning the matter to the king (See Neh. 1:1 and 2:1). He then traveled another four months from Susa to Jerusalem (see Ezra 7:9).

- Certainly, Nehemiah knew that the task was so great he could not do it without the help of God.
- Someone issued the challenge to all believers to attempt something for God so impossible that unless He is in it, it is doomed to failure.
- The next time you are wanting to solve a problem, or clean up a mess, don't forget to pray!

3. A spiritual application.

Just as Nehemiah needed an honest assessment of physical Jerusalem, we also need an honest assessment of spiritual Jerusalem. Remember, Christianity is called:

- Jerusalem from above (Gal. 4:26)
- The heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22).
- The new Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2).
- The holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10).

EXERCISING OUR HONESTY (Answers may be kept private)

- List three areas in your own life that need improvement.
- List three areas in your family that need improvement.
- List three areas in your church that need improvement.

GETTING AND GIVING

One of these two words describes virtually every aspect and action of our lives. Either we are motivated by "getting" something, or we are motivated by "giving" something. It goes without saying, of course, that Jesus was motivated by giving. Jesus did not go to Jerusalem like a tourist seeking to "get" a bargain. He went to Jerusalem to "give" His life as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6). The Scriptures do not say that God loved Himself, but rather that He loved the world. That's why He "gave" His only begotten Son.

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther were all like Jesus. They were not motivated by a selfish desire to "get" anything. Their lives were characterized by giving of themselves for the benefit of others. Paradoxically the devil promises freedom and gives slavery, and Christ promises slavery and gives freedom. Those who exalt themselves will be abased, and vice versa.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Should we get married to "get" or to "give"?
- Should we choose a church by what we can "get" or what we can "give"?
- Should we choose a job based on what we can "give" or what we can "give"?
- Discuss how selfishness and dishonesty create problems in our lives, homes, and churches.
- Discuss how honesty and truth provide a foundation for all that is good.
- Why is it so easy to see a speck in someone else's eye?
- What possessed Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1 - 11)

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO GET SOMETHING DONE, THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HONESTY! IT IS THE TRUTH THAT MAKES US FREE! (JOHN 8:32)

LESSON # 6
GETTING ORGANIZED
“For God is not a God of disorder . . . ” (1 Cor 14:33)
(Read Nehemiah chapter 3)

OVERVIEW OF LESSON - Everything God makes is orderly. It is the devil who is the author of confusion. In the church God has placed spiritually gifted people to get things organized. 1 Cor. 12:28 calls this the “gift of administration”. One benefit from this lesson will involve encouraging all of us to live orderly and well organized lives.

Putting 9 men on a baseball diamond, or 11 men on a football field is of little value unless they are organized. Even in a contest as simple as tug of war it is important for all the team members to pull together. The word “synergy” literally means “working together”. This concept makes possible a mathematical result greater than the sum of individual parts. For example, the combined tensile strength of iron, carbon, nickel, and chromium is 260,000 lbs. p.s.i. When melted together, however, these 4 metals produce chrome nickel steel with a tensile strength of 350,000 lbs. p.s.i. The Bible states that 5 Hebrew soldiers would chase a 100, and 100 would put 10,000 to flight (Lev. 26:8). The efficiency of 5 soldiers was therefore magnified 5 times when combined with the efforts of 95 others.

Obviously, the walls of Jerusalem were not constructed by accident. Notice how many men from all different walks of life, worked together. They were doing different things, at different times, but their efforts were certainly well organized. Someone had to be responsible for this organization! The Greek words translated as “gift of administration” is “kubernesis”. It originally referred to the captain of a ship. There are times when a captain can consult with others, but there are also times of storm when he has to make decisions on his own. The safety of the ship, of course, depended on one center of command, and well coordinated efforts by the crew. Nehemiah was evidently the captain of the ship and the catalyst that started the whole process of rebuilding the walls. Remember, the man who sounded the trumpet to direct the people was with Nehemiah (Neh. 4:18). Under him there must have been many able lieutenants who were willing to follow orders, organize workers, and make provision for supplies. 12 gates to Jerusalem are mentioned in the book of Nehemiah, and 12 gates are also in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12ff).

As we have already stated, the workers came from all different walks of life. There were priests and Levites, government officials and businessmen, goldsmiths and perfumers. Even though they came from different backgrounds, and different locations, they all had a mind to work (Neh. 4:6). The task was not easy. It was work! Remember! The only reason these workers even took off their clothes was to wash them (Neh. 4:23). By the Grace of God all of these people worked as one and saw the job through to completion.

BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATION

- I once hired a carpenter. He never seemed to be in a hurry, and yet at the end of the day had done a tremendous amount of work. One key to his efficiency was organization. He had organized his tools and materials in such a way that no time was wasted in hunting for something he needed.
- Another friend was in charge of equipment used by the Highway Dept. in our area. He saved the tax payers a lot of money by standardizing the vehicles and equipment being used. For example, every dump truck was identical. It didn't matter what vehicle the driver

used, the switches, shovels, flares, etc. were positioned the same.

- Some “organization” comes directly from God. Ants, for example, function without a commander, overseer or ruler (Prov 6:7). In the church, however, God has placed the spiritual gift of administration and it is obvious that He expects it to be used.

BUILDING WITH STONES

- Stone workers do their work differently from brick layers. Since bricks are the same size, it doesn't matter which one you choose. Stones, however, are always different. For this reason care must be used in selecting the right stone for the right place.
- Just as the physical Jerusalem was built of physical “stones”, so also spiritual Jerusalem is composed of “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5).
- Tell of someone you know of who is a perfect fit for a job for Jesus.
- Please consider that Christians are: **“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” (Eph 2:20-22)**

HELP FROM HEAVEN

- List some ways that Nehemiah received help from heaven.
- Why were the Apostles told to wait for the promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:4).
- As prophets and teachers prayed in Antioch, the Holy Spirit directed them to separate Barnabas and Saul to the work God called them to (Acts 13:1 - 3).
- It was the Holy Spirit that directed Paul to choose Timothy as his helper (1 Tim 1:18). Timothy was a perfect traveling and companion and helper to Paul (see Phil. 2:19 - 23).
- The Holy Spirit watches over the church and gives gifts as they are needed (1 Cor. 12:7)
- If our church has a need, do you believe that the Holy Spirit will raise up someone to help?
- What should we do while we are waiting for God to answer our prayers?

SCRIPTURES REGARDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

See Rom. 12:3 - 8; 1 Cor. 12:1 - 31; Eph. 4:7 - 16; 1 Pet. 4:10; etc.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- Did Nehemiah have the gift of administration before God called him, or did he receive it in conjunction with his call?
- Seven spiritual gifts are mentioned in Rom. 12:6 - 8. Which gift do you have?
- Spiritual people are also like members of a body (1 Cor. 12:14 - 31). Which are you?
- Explain Phil. 2:13 regarding the call of God on your life.
- How can we recognize someone who has the gift of administration?
- Name someone whom you feel has the gift of administration!
- Would your life be improved if you were better organized?
- Which gift is more important, organization or love (see 1 Cor. 13).

LESSON # 7

(Everybody did something!)

“So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.” (Neh 4:6)

(READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 7 - BASICALLY THE SAME AS EZRA 2)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON! We need to understand that the success of Nehemiah not only depended upon help from heaven, but also on the united effort of thousands of his fellow Jews. Obviously it is better to get thousands of people working, than to attempt to do the work of thousands of people. The application of this truth to Christianity is obvious!

NOT PROFESSIONAL BUILDERS

As we have already pointed out, the workers who rebuilt the walls were not professional builders. They were priests, Levites, government officials, merchants, goldsmiths, etc. Yet, they “worked with all their heart” and completed the task in only 52 days (Neh. 6:15). We are not told exactly how they did it. Common sense, however, leads us to believe that when they came to a problem they could not solve, the problem was solved in one of two ways. First, perhaps they prayed and got the answer directly from God. This is the way that Dr. George Washington Carver came to understand how to synthesize 300 different products from the peanut. Secondly, they could have prayed and God directed them to another human being who had the answer to their problem. At any rate, these dedicated people did the job just the same. Just think how little would have been accomplished if the only people building were professionals!

GROWTH OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The growth of the early church also came as a result of those who were not professional preachers. Jesus prayed all night long and then selected very ordinary men to be His apostles. (See Luke 6:12 - 16). There was not one professional preacher among them. When persecution scattered the Jerusalem church we are told “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (Acts 8:4). The Corinthian letter reveals that the early church had many who took part in public worship. In fact Paul wrote: “You can all prophesy in turn” (1 Cor. 14:31). Remember! The growth of any movement will be in direct proportion to the number of people who are propagating its message. This is why some cults are growing faster than the church.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLERGY

Our English word “clergy” comes from the Greek word “kleros”. The word is found 13 times in the N.T. Scriptures and is translated in the KJV as “lot, lots, heritage, and inheritance”. It is important to note that in the Bible it never refers to professional preachers. In fact, it refers to all Christians regardless of their occupation. For example, Peter taught that elders were not to lord it over God’s “heritage” (1 Peter 5:3). That’s the Bible word for “clergy”. In the church of the Lord Jesus Christ every believer is a “priest” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) and every believer was also a part of the “clergy”. The word “laity” comes from the Greek word “laos” which means “people”. In the Bible, the words “clergy” and “laity” both refer to all Christians. Gene Edwards points out that archaeologists have studied 500,000 documents and fragments from the early Christian Era without finding one reference to a clergyman.

Then where did the clergy system come from? While the seeds of the clergy system were sown earlier, Historian Phillip Schaff states that Tertullian (A.D. 160 - 220) was the first to claim priestly privileges for Christian ministers. Later the fourth general council at Carthage (A.D. 398) prohibited “laymen” from teaching in the presence of “clergymen” without their consent. While Catholic scholars claim that Peter was the first pope, Henry Halley believes that Gregory 1 (A.D. 590 - 604) was the first to have the authority of “The Supreme Pontiff Of The Universal Church”. The word “reverend” means to be feared. It is found only once in the Bible (Ps. 111:9 KJV) and refers to God. Clergymen came to be feared because they claimed to have the right to deny the common people access to God. Peter was married and would not allow men to bow down to him (Acts 10:26). Modern Popes cannot marry and expect people to bow down to them.

EACH ONE TEACH ONE

Paul wrote Timothy: **“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Tim 2:2)** The mathematical progression of each Christian teaching another goes like this (2 - 4 - 8 - 16 - 32 - 64 - 128 - 256 - 512 - 1024) Note, after only 10 replications you have over 1,000 believers. In 20 you would have over 1,000,000 believers, In 30 over 1,000,000,000 believers. In 33 over 8,000,000,000. This, as you know, exceeds our present world population. If each convert took an entire year to win another, the world could conceivably be won to Christ in only 33 years starting with only one person. Remember! God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors, and teachers to train every Christian for the works of service (Eph. 4:11 - 16).

Frank Laubach used this each one teach one program to teach people to read and write. When his son came through Joplin many years ago over 96 million people had learned to read and write through the each one teach one method.

Note that Timothy was to entrust “reliable men” with the message. The word translated “men” is “anthropois” with includes both men and women. If you give a talent to someone who is unreliable, they might bury it in the ground and not use it. The question for you and me is: “Are we reliable”?

MEGASHIFT

The book “Megashift”, by Jim Rutz, claims that there is a world wide movement away from clergy dominated religion. While the church is not growing in some parts of the world, like the U.S., Canada, and Europe, there is an evangelism explosion in other parts of the world. He claims that every day there are 175,000 new Christians in the world, and that most of these new converts are not being won by professional clergymen. Just like the First Century, it is the common folks that are carrying the message of Christ to a lost world.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How was it possible for Nehemiah to get so many people to work with all their hearts?
- How was it possible for those from the Jerusalem to church to all preach the word?
- Why is Islam growing so fast in the United States?
- Is the church really growing in other parts of the world or is this just an urban legend?
- Why wasn't the Ethiopian Eunuch sent back to Jerusalem for training (Acts 8:30 - 40).
- What can we do in our church to encourage every member to be a minister?
- What would God have to do to get me to do some special ministry?

LESSON # 8 (Opposition)

“When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,” (Neh 4:1)

(Read Nehemiah chapter 4)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON - Our lesson today exposes us to the reality of satanic attacks. Paul said it like this: “ When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.” (Rom 7:21). When Nehemiah wanted to rebuilt the walls, Sanballat and others were there with opposition and ridicule. When Jesus was baptized, immediately He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mk. 1:12). Paul said that a great door for effective work was open for him, but there were also many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:9). One fact, therefore, that we can take away from this lesson, is that every time we decide to do something good, Satan will always be there to oppose us.

THE OPPOSITION WAS SERIOUS

- The ridicule Nehemiah experienced was only a minor inconvenience. Tobiah, for example, said that the wall was so weak that even a fox could break it down by accident (4:3). This may have discouraged some, but in the big picture it was not a serious problem.
- Sanballat, however, planned to physically attack and kill the Jewish workers, and that was serious (4:8 - 11). This, of course, made doing the work much more difficult for the workers had to carry building materials in one hand and their weapons in the other (4:17).
- Four times Sanballat sent messages to Nehemiah trying to lure him into a trap (6:1 - 4) and on the fifth time he concocted the lie that Nehemiah was planning to rebel against his government and make himself king (6:6 - 7).
- Next, Tobiah and Sanballat hired someone to intimidate Nehemiah and lure him into the temple (6:10 - 14). Even though there was serious opposition, with the help of God these godly people were able to overcome that opposition and complete the work to which God had called them.

OTHER BIBLE HEROES ALSO HAD OPPOSITION

- Sometimes Bible heroes found opposition in their own family.
- Job’s wife told him to curse God and die (Job. 2:9).
 - Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers (Gen. 37).
 - Moses was opposed by his brother and sister (Nu. 12).
 - Gideon was afraid of his own family (Judges 6:37).
 - David was opposed by his oldest brother even after he had been anointed as the next king (1 Sam. 17:28).
 - Jesus was also opposed by his family (John 7:1 - 11).
 - Paul was persecuted by his Jewish kinsmen (2 Cor. 11:24 - 28). He went so far as to say that all who live a godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12).

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF OPPOSITION?

- Nehemiah and his fellow workers worked harder, made special efforts, and overcome their opposition.

- Half of the workers were equipped with spears, shields, bows, and armor (4:16).
- The workers built with one hand and carried a weapon in the other (4:17).
- Each builder wore his sword at his side (4:18)
- A man with a trumpet was constantly with Nehemiah to direct their troops in case of attack (4:18).’
- They worked from the first light of dawn till the stars came out (4:21).
- They worked so hard that they scarcely took off their clothes (4:23)
- Some little ones, however are offended and destroyed by opposition. (Matt. 13:21; 18:5 - 7).
- Stronger believers are able to glory in tribulation (Rom. 5:3)
- When we see our brother struggling, and we help him carry his burden, we are fulfilling the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

ALL THINGS CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

Please prayerfully consider: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28).** All things are not good, but God can take bad things and use them to bring about a good result. Note the testimony of Paul his thorn in the flesh, ultimately proved to be a blessing in his life, even though that thorn was a messenger from Satan (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

WE CAN BE OVERCOMERS

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” (1 Jn 4:4)

Consider Abraham Lincoln. He had to work to support his family after they were forced out of their home. (1816) His mother died (1818). Failed in business (1831). Was defeated for legislature (1832). Lost his job and couldn't get into law school (1832). (Declared bankruptcy, and spent the next 17 years of his life paying off the money he borrowed from friends to start his business (1833). Was defeated for legislature again (1834). Was engaged to be married, but his sweetheart died and his heart was broken (1835). (Had a nervous breakdown and spent the next six months in bed (1836). Was defeated in becoming the speaker of the state legislature (1838). Was defeated in becoming elector (1840). Was defeated for Congress (1843). Was defeated for Congress (1846). Was defeated for Congress again (1848). Was rejected for the job of Land Officer in his home state (1849). Was defeated for Senate (1854). Was defeated for Vice-President -- got less than 100 votes (1856). Was defeated for Senate for the third time. (1858). Was elected President of the United States (1860).

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How was Nehemiah able to maintain his personal courage in the face of opposition?
- How was he able to inspire the workers to not give up?
- Tell of someone you know who was hurt, or destroyed by opposition.
- Tell of someone you know who overcame opposition and became stronger because of it.
- Was Paul correct in opposing Peter? (Gal. 2:1 - 14)
- Paul was forbidden by the Spirit from preaching in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6 - 7). How can we tell whether roadblocks come from the Holy Spirit, or Satan?
- Name one thing in particular that Nehemiah did that has inspired you.

LESSON # 9
Helping the poor
(Read Nehemiah 5)

“Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations.” (Neh 5:17)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON - One benefit from today’s lesson will be to note how Nehemiah helped the poor, and then to prayerfully seek God’s guidance in how we should help the poor.

The Bible has a lot to say about the poor - here are a few examples.

- **“Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits.” (Exod 23:6)**
- **“but during the seventh year let the land lie unploughed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it,” (Exod 23:11)**
- **“Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.” (Lev 19:10)**
- **“If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother.” (Deut 15:7)**
- **“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in your land.” (Deut 15:11).**
- This is not a peripheral issue, but is a major theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

NEHEMIAH DID HELP THE POOR

Rich people sometimes take advantage of the poor in times of economic difficulty. Such activity is condemned in Scripture. James 5:1 - 6 is but one example. Nehemiah also saw the same type of corruption in his day.

- Rich folks had everything they needed.
- Some, however, did not have enough to eat (5:2).
- Others mortgaged their fields, vineyards, and homes to get grain (5:3).
- Others had to borrow money to pay their taxes (5:4).
- Others had to sell their sons and daughters into slavery (5:5).
- The Hebrews were forbidden to charge usury (interest) to their brethren (Ex. 22:25), yet this is precisely what they were doing. Nehemiah got angry at such conduct. We are commanded to help the poor, not oppress them!
- Nehemiah loaned money and grain at no interest (5:10).
- Nehemiah refused to tax the people so he could have food (5:14 - 15).
- He did not acquire any land (5:16).
- He fed over 150 people every day at his own table (5:17).
- He told the rich to give back the possessions they had taken (5:11).
- He told them to stop taking usury (5:10).
- He made them take a vow to do these things (5:12).

“He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.” (Prov 19:17) Since the borrower is servant to the lender (Prov. 22:7) Explain this! How can we mortals “lend” to the Lord.

COUNT THE BLESSINGS

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.” (Ps 41:1-3 KJV)

List 4 blessings for those who consider the poor.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

LAW AND LOVE

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus contrasted what the Law said, with what Jesus demands. Each time, the love of Christ is more demanding. (See Matt. 5) The law says not to murder, Jesus said not to be angry. The Law not to commit adultery, Jesus said not to look at a woman with lust. The Law said to love our neighbor, Jesus said to love our enemies.

The point is, that we are to be governed by love, not be law. Jesus said that if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (Matt. 5:39). Let us suppose that your five year old child strikes you on the right cheek. What is the proper response?

It is important to understand this principle for love looks beyond the immediate circumstance and endeavors to do what is best for the one who is loved. Jesus said to give when somebody asks (Matt. 5:42). What if a murderer asks you for a gun? What if an alcoholic asks you for a drink? Remember, love is the fulfilling of the Law (Rom. 13:8). We must always want to do what is best for those whom we love!

WORKING AND EATING

Paul wrote that if a man does not work, he shouldn't eat (2 Thess. 3:10). Apparently some were expecting Jesus to return immediately, and quit work to prepare for His Coming. After they ran out of food and money they started begging from those who were working. Paul had a right to be paid by the church, but chose not to exercise that right. He worked in their midst and did not eat anyone's food without paying for it (2 Thess. 3:7 - 9). Note that Paul wanted this to be a "model" for other believers.

For lazy people who did not obey these instructions, Paul said to take special note of him, and do not associate with him that he may be ashamed. He is not to be treated like an enemy, however, for he is still our brother (2 Thess. 3:14 - 15).

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- Was Nehemiah right to help the poor?
- Is it right to give money to beggars on the street?
- Have government welfare programs helped or hindered the poor?
- Are all poor people lazy?
- Is it possible that you will ever be in poverty?
- If you were poor, how would you want somebody to help you?
- Discuss the Judgement described in Matt. 25:31 - 46.

LESSON # 10 OUR OWN PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP

(Read Nehemiah 5 again)

“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON - It is important to note that God knows what everyone is doing with their money. Some in Nehemiah's day were selfish and stingy, but he was not! Nehemiah did not expect the government or somebody else to make all the sacrifices, he also gave generously of his own money to help the poor. Unfortunately, many modern leaders are not like Nehemiah. They exploit the poor to their own advantage. They live like kings while demanding that someone else give money to the poor. Remember! God will judge each of us individually on how we spend our money.

Back in 1997 one famous politician who claimed to be a friend of the poor listed only \$353 in charitable giving on his tax returns. That year his adjusted gross income was \$197,729. Another politician who also claims to represent poor lives in a 28,000' mansion, pays \$400 for a haircut, and charged \$55,000 for delivering one speech at the University of California on Jan. 9, 2006. His personal wealth is estimated to be between \$37 and \$62 million. Yet he sees nothing wrong with his opulent life style and condemns others for ignoring those who suffer. Another famous politician who specializes in "helping" minorities has become a multi millionaire from his efforts. Adding insult to injury he indulges in the luxury of paying \$3,000 a months to support his "love child" by a former mistress. These men "say" they want to help the poor, but apparently with somebody else's money, not their own! Nehemiah was not that kind of a man. As we have pointed out in lesson # 9:

- Nehemiah loaned money and grain at no interest (5:10).
- Nehemiah refused to tax the people so he could have food (5:14 - 15).
- He did not acquire any land (5:16).
- He fed over 150 people every day at his own table (5:17).
- He told the rich to give back the possessions they had taken (5:11).
- He told them to stop taking usury (5:10).
- He made them take a vow to do these things (5:12).
- He did not turn someone else's poverty into a business to make himself rich!

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Scriptures are replete with examples to prove that we are going to be judged as individuals, not as a group.

- There was a time when almost everyone in the world was wicked, but God found Noah to be a righteous man and blameless among the people (Gen. 6:9)..
- God destroyed Sodom but delivered Lot because he considered him righteous (2 Pet. 2:7).
- Jesus told the story of three men who were given various amounts of money. Each was judged individually on what he did with the money God had given him (Matt. 25:14 - 30).
- The Scriptures teach that It is required for those who have been given a trust to be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2).
- Notice in the book of Nehemiah that many were called upon to repent, but not Nehemiah. He was faithful in what God called him to do in rebuilding the walls, ,and also in his dealings with the poor.
- please consider: **“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So**

if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." (Luke 16:10-13)

FIRST RESPONSIBILITIES

- Our first area of responsibility is to our own family. The Scriptures teach: **"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."** (1 Tim 5:8).
- Jesus condemned the Pharisees and teachers of the law because they didn't take care of their parents (Matt. 15:1 - 7).;
- Parental responsibility not only deals with present needs, but also saving for the future. Note: **"After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children."** (2 Cor 12:14)
- Not only should parents pay for their children's present and future needs, we should also teach them the importance of stewardship in their own lives. Remember! **"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."** (Prov 22:6)

PURE RELIGION

James wrote by inspiration: **"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."** (James 1:27). The point of this verse is that people who have the Spirit of Jesus help those in need. Today many women are destitute who are not widows, and many children are in need who are not orphans. We need to help them just the same!

Here are a few suggestions. You can become a youth sponsor at church, a volunteer for Big Brothers, a worker with the Scouts,, a foster parent, an adoptive parent, a volunteer at the hospital, a hospice volunteer, a volunteer with A.R.M. prison ministries, or just make regular visits at a local nursing home. In addition to the many ways you can help the need at home, there are also a great many programs that enable you to help children in other countries. The Haitian Christian Mission, Ninos de Mexico, and many other Christian ministries can put you in touch with needy children in third world countries. You can write to them, and they will write back and send you a picture. You can send them money for school clothes, birthday presents, and love them as Jesus would have you to.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- How can I lay up treasure in heaven? (Matt. 6:19)
- How can I teach my children to be generous?
- Does God expect me to tithe, or was this just for the Jews (Malachi 3:6 - 12)
- Did I get my money by myself, or did God help me?
- Have I done a good job in caring for my family?
- Whom do I really feel sorry for outside of my family that needs help?
- Even though I can't help everybody, can I help them?
- Is it really more blessed to give than to receive? (Acts 20:35).

LESSON # 11
A Return to the Scriptures
(Read Nehemiah 8)

“So on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.” (Neh 8:2-3)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON - The purpose of this lesson is to show that the Bible is essential to a right relationship with God. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105). Jesus said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4) There can never be a real revival without the Word of God!

LOSING CONTACT WITH THE BIBLE

When Moses wrote the Laws of God he expected them to be read to the people: **“So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them: “At the end of every seven years, in the year for cancelling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people-- men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns-- so that they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” (Deut 31:9-13)**

Unfortunately, the people of God lost contact with the Word of God. In fact, they had not properly observed the Feast of Tabernacles since the days of Joshua the son of Nun (Neh. 8:17). Joshua died approximately 1443 B.C. and Nehemiah rebuilt the walls approximately 444 B.C. When they did understand the message of God, they immediately obeyed it.

MARKS OF SINCERITY

- The people in the days of Nehemiah were obviously sincere. Please note:
- They assembled as one man (8:1).
 - All who could understand came from daybreak until noon listening to the Bible (8:3).
 - They listened attentively (8:3).
 - In reverence for the Word of God they “stood up”, “lifted their hands”, “bowed down with their faces to the ground”, “wept”, and “understood” the Scriptures (8:5 - 12).
 - When they understood how to correctly observe the Feast of Tabernacles they immediately obeyed (8:16).

BIBLE STUDY AND MANNA

Please note the association between gathering manna, and studying the Bible: **“Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you**

with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut 8:2-3)

Here are a few facts about manna from Exodus 16.

- The people were to go out each day. (v. 4)
- God said this was a test to see if they would follow His instructions (v. 4)
- On the 6th day they were to gather twice as much. (v. 5)
- The manna appeared after the dew disappeared. (v. 14).
- The manna melted when the sun waxed hot. (v. 21).
- Each person was to gather an omer of manna each day (about 2 quarts). (v. 16)
- Anything left over from the daily ration was full of maggots and stank (v. 20).
- It was not easy to gather the manna. From the Tabernacle to the edge of camp was 7/8 of a mile (A Sabbath day's journey). Their animals were kept outside the camp and those seeking manna would have to go beyond where the animals grazed. There were 2 or 3 million people also gathering manna. If it was not eaten raw, it would have to be washed, ground into a meal, and cooked. This would not be easy in the wilderness.
- **GOD GAVE MANNA TO TEACH US HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE!**

WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE A BIBLE

- John Wyclif was the first man to translate the Bible into English. This was considered a crime and in 1428 his bones were dug up and burned.
- Gutenberg's moveable type printing press was put in operation around 1450.
- William Tyndale was the first man to produce a printed Bible in English. He was strangled and burned at the stake on Oct. 6:1536. His dying words were "Lord, open the King of England's eyes".
- The King of England did not "authorize" a Bible until 1611. As you know, it is called the "King James Version".
- Today, I am told that the average American family has 9 Bibles in their home.
- The Bereans were considered noble because they studied the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). They obviously did not have Bibles of their own and would have to walk to their synagogue, get someone to unlock the sacred chest, and perhaps stand in line to study the Bible. There were no chapters in the Bible until the 12th century, and no verses until several hundred years later. Yet the Bereans had the diligence and discipline to check out what Paul preached and see if it was truly in the Bible.
- The Voice of the Martyrs markets Jesus t-shirts. It says "This t-shirt is illegal in 51 countries".
- We have no excuse for not studying the Bible!

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- Would you be willing to stand from sunrise to noon for 7 days listening to someone read the Law?
- Will God judge Americans by a different standard than other people in the world?
- How hungry would you have to be to go out and gather manna?
- Is God or Satan behind most of the programs available on television?
- How can we get our children interested in reading the Bible instead of watching TV?
- If the Bible was a document leaving me millions of dollars, would I be more interested in it?

Lesson # 12
Confessing Our Sins
(Read Nehemiah 9)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” (1 Jn 1:9-10)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON - To learn and put into practice the importance of confession!

- Remember! Nehemiah began this great spiritual adventure by confessing his sins, and the sins of the people: **“let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly towards you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.” (Neh 1:6-7)**
- Remember also that when the people began their great spiritual adventure, they too began with the confession of their sins: **“On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God.” (Neh 9:1-3)**
- David, a man after God's own heart, was quick to confess his sins to God: **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.” (Ps 51:1-4)**
- When the prodigal son came home, he confessed: **“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” (Luke 15:21)**
- **“To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)**

CONFESSING TO ONE ANOTHER

Every living thing must have an environment to survive. A fish needs water, an orchid needs warmth, and Christians need one another. A burning coal removed from the fire does not last long. Please consider: **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that**

you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

The expression “one another” is found many times in the Bible. We are to love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, admonish one another, comfort one another, etc. Paul put it like this: **“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:1-2)**

CONFESSING CHRIST

- **“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” ” (Matt 10:32-33 KJV)**
- **“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” (Luke 9:26)**
- **“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” (Rom 10:9-10)**
- **“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” (I Jn 4:15 KJV)**

PRIDE

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood . . .” (Prov 6:16-17 KJV) Satan, as you know, does not confess to anything. He is too proud! Isaiah 14:12 - 14 and Ez. 28:14 - 17 describe how Satan was blameless when God created him (Ez. 28:15), but became proud because of his beauty (Ez. 28:17). This is why God threw him down to the earth. **NO WONDER GOD HATES PRIDE!** Those who are too proud to confess sins, or to confess Christ, are victims of Satan. You cannot be saved without confessing Christ! Ultimately, however, everybody, including Satan, will bow their knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:10 - 11). Unfortunately, by then it will be too late!

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- Would God have answered Nehemiah's prayer if he had not confessed his sin?
- Will God answer our prayers if we do not confess our sins?
- Why would not Satan confess that he had done something wrong?
- We do we not confess that we have done something wrong?
- Was Judas ashamed of Jesus?
- Why would anyone be ashamed of Jesus?

Please consider that there are at least 3 kinds of sin, personal, private, and public. Our confession should be appropriate to our sin. If we sin personally, we can confess personally. If we sin privately, we need to confess to those whom we have wronged. If we have sinned publicly, then we need to confess publicly. If we have sinned and don't know it, Jesus is our advocate and Mediator and intercede for us in the presence of God (1 Jn. 1:8 - 2:2).

LESSON # 13

Dedicating the Wall

(Read Nehemiah 12:1 - 13:31)

PURPOSE OF THE LESSON - This lesson will help us to understand that we must be faithful until death (Rev. 2:10). Nehemiah and his faithful workers rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem 52 days, but their work was far from being over. The house of God was being neglected, the Sabbath law was being violated, and the people were marrying pagans. If they were able to overcome these problems, Satan would see to it that other problems would follow. We will never be through laboring for Christ until we die!

GENEALOGIES

The Bible has many genealogical lists. These were important to establish the right of inheritance, and also for the priests and Levites to be allowed to serve God in the Temple. Some without proper records were excluded from the priesthood (7:64). In particular, the genealogies had to be kept to verify the identity of Christ. Matt. 1 contains the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, and Lk. 3 through Mary. Jesus came from the family of David both legally and biologically.

DEDICATING THE WALL

Even a cursory reading of the text reveals that the people went to a great deal of trouble to celebrate and honor the completion of their task. It was certainly appropriate that they do so. The Scriptures teach that we are to give honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7). It is sad when important occasions like marriage, funerals, ordination services, graduations, etc. are trivialized. Paul wanted Epaphroditus to be welcomed with great joy and honor (Phil. 2:29). Just as soldiers should be honored for their service, so also soldiers of the cross are worthy of accolades and respect.

TOBIAH

Eliashib the priest, was closely associated with Tobiah, and provided him with a large room associated with the Temple. We must remember that Tobiah was an enemy. Note:

- He was an Ammonite who was grieved that anyone would help the Jews (2:10).
- He laughed at and scorned the efforts of Nehemiah and accused him of rebelling against the king (2:19).
- He was the one who ridiculed their efforts by saying that even a fox could tear down the walls (4:3).
- When he heard that the walls were going up he conspired to fight against the Jews (4:7 - 8).
- He tried to lure Nehemiah away from the work God called him to (6:1 - 4).
- He helped hire a false prophet to reproach Nehemiah (6:10 - 14).
- He wrote letters to put Nehemiah in fear (6:19).
- **WHEN NEHEMIAH LEARNED OF THIS TREASONOUS ACT THE SCRIPTURES NOTE:
“And came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room. I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God,**

with the grain offerings and the incense.” (Neh 13:7-9)

- Someone has observed that when the boat is in the water, that’s the way it should be. When the water gets in the boat you have got trouble. When the church is in the world, that’s the way it should be. When the world gets into the church you have got trouble. Christians need to guard against Satan getting in the church, just as Nehemiah guarded against the wicked Tobiah.

FOCUS

There is an old saying that when a man chases two rabbits, he catches neither. Nehemiah used wisdom in putting first things first. If the walls had not been rebuilt Sanballat and Tobiah would have been able to attack and destroy the Jews and reforms he later instituted would have been impossible. Once the walls were up and dedicated then he was able to focus his attention on other things that needed to be done.

REVIEW

It is hard to think of a time when God “called” somebody to sit down and do nothing. Perhaps God called several people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, but the only one who responded was someone hundreds of miles away. The difficulties he faced, and the sacrifices he made, were similar to those made by Jesus. Jesus saw a need, and left heaven to meet that need. After three years with Jesus the disciples still didn’t grasp the simple significance of seeing a need and then doing something about it. At the last supper everybody knew that their feet were dirty, but no one but Jesus arose to meet that need. He said: **“You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:13-15)** It is interesting to note that the churches that take this command literally and wash one another’s feet in church, invariably wash their feet before church and put on clean socks. If the disciples’s feet were already clean, Jesus would not have washed them.

Nehemiah, like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, Elisha, David, Esther, John the Baptist,, and a host of others were called by God to do something that needed to be done. If they didn’t respond, and stand in the gap for God, the Lord would undoubtedly have raised up someone else to do what needd to be done. Obviously, however, they came into the kingdom for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14).

Let us listen to God as Nehemiah did. Let us fast and pray as Nehemiah did. Let us dare to risk it all as Nehemiah did. Let us focus on the job that needs to be done as Nehemiah did. Let us honor and celebrate the completion of a task as Nehemiah did. Let us continue to be faithful until death as Nehemiah did.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- Why did Eliashib the priest associate and provide a large room for Tobiah?
- How has the study of Nehemiah helped you to be a better Christian?
- How does fasting help in receiving answers to prayer?
- Joel predicted that Christianity would be characterized by young men having visions and old men dreaming dreams (Acts 2:17). Do you have any visions or dreams of what God wants you to do?

FACTS ABOUT NEHEMIAH

- He was the son of Hacaliah (Neh. 1:1; 10:1). The fact that both their names contain the word “Yah” (Jehovah) gives indication of strong religious convictions.
- He was apparently from a prominent family as his brother, Hanani, was part of an official delegation from Jerusalem to Susa (Neh. 1:2).
- He had a very responsible job as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I of Persia (Neh. 1:11).
- He was a man of prayer.
- He was sensitive to the call of God upon his life.
- He was a man not afraid to take risks.
- He asked for, and was granted the privilege of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
- He wisely asked for letters of authority, and also financial help from the king.
- He was able to unify God’s people enlist their help in rebuilding Jerusalem.
- He would not allow criticism to keep him from his task.
- He was also dedicated to helping the poor (Neh. 5:1ff.)
- He was willing to invest his own personal fortune to accomplish the work. 150 Jews and officials ate at his table (Neh. 5:17).
- He later became the governor of Jerusalem (Neh. 7:2).
- He had Ezra read the Law of God to the people (Neh. 8:1ff.)
- He led the people to confess their sins (Neh. 9:1ff.)
- He was not only interested in rebuilding the physical Jerusalem, but also calling the people of God to purity (13:1 - 27).