

NEHEMIAH INITIATIVE



**FAITHFUL
FATHERING**

dads becoming heroes

NEHEMIAH

GROUNDING, GUIDANCE & STRENGTH



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WHY A NEHEMIAH INITIATIVE?

"REMEMBER THE INSTRUCTION YOU GAVE YOUR SERVANT MOSES, SAYING, 'IF YOU ARE UNFAITHFUL, I WILL SCATTER YOU AMONG THE NATIONS, BUT IF YOU RETURN TO ME AND OBEY MY COMMANDS, THEN EVEN IF YOUR EXILED PEOPLE ARE AT THE FARTHEST HORIZON, I WILL GATHER THEM FROM THERE AND BRING THEM TO THE PLACE I HAVE CHOSEN AS A DWELLING FOR MY NAME.'"

- Nehemiah 1:8-9

Nehemiah's prayer, Neh.1:5-11, conveys the state of the Israelites. Those exiled to Babylon had turned from their walk with God and the remnant that escaped to the lands around Jerusalem typically married foreign women and started worshipping their gods. It was evident that most of God's chosen people had forgotten they were chosen. Ezra had hoped to see the Israelites turn back to God when they rebuilt the temple, but even that major accomplishment did not turn the hearts of the people. They continued to marry foreign women, worship other gods, go into the city to do business any day of the week, and even use the temple as a storehouse.

Nehemiah was convicted that the state of the Israelites was directly related to the state of the Holy City. The report from his brother was, "THE WALL OF JERUSALEM IS BROKEN DOWN, AND ITS GATES HAVE BEEN BURNED WITH FIRE."- Neh.1:3. The people were walking in and out of the Holy City as if it were no different than the surrounding lands. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah inspected the wall and reported to the people, "YOU SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN: JERUSALEM LIES IN RUINS, AND ITS GATES HAVE BEEN BURNED WITH FIRE. COME, LET US REBUILD THE WALL OF JERUSALEM, AND WE WILL NO LONGER BE IN DISGRACE.' I ALSO TOLD THEM ABOUT THE GRACIOUS HAND OF MY GOD UPON ME AND WHAT THE KING HAD SAID TO ME. THEY REPLIED, 'LET US START REBUILDING.' SO THEY BEGAN THIS GOOD WORK." - Neh.2:17-18.

Nehemiah was convinced that once the people began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, they would be reminded of the significance the Holy City had as a dwelling for His name. They rebuilt the wall, built and set the gates and reestablished Jerusalem as the Holy City in 52 days!

It is significant to see the wall not as a wall of isolation, though that is certainly an understandable connotation, but rather as a wall of delineation - a reestablishment of the Holy City and a reestablishment of the Israelites as the chosen people of God. The City and the people were to be different from the surrounding lands.

Today marriages are failing about half the time, 40% of kids are waking up without Dad present in the home, and 50% of the kids will spend some time living with just one parent before the age of 18. When Dad isn't present, students are twice as likely to drop out of high school; young ladies are three times more likely to become teen mothers; young men are ten times as likely to have behavioral problems; and children are four times more likely to live below the poverty line. And the numbers in Church mirror those of society! You see the trouble we are in: the Church lies in ruin, the disciplines in marriage and family have been compromised.

Come, let us rebuild a spiritual wall, and we will no longer be in disgrace.

The spiritual wall is a reminder of who we are and Whose we are as Christians. Grounded in relationship with Jesus the Christ, the rebuilding of the wall is the pursuit of Christ-likeness – understanding His 'I am' statements as a call to conform to Him a bit more each day. The gates will be set in place as spiritual disciplines – they open in love but close tight to worldly influences. Christians are called to be an influence for the Kingdom in this world. The disgrace is that the world is notching significant victories in the battle for influence. This spiritual wall will be a wall of delineation – a reestablishment of who we are as Christians and the powerful influence the Church should have in this world.



My prayer today is similar to Nehemiah's – Lord, I confess the sins of man today, including myself and my father's house. We have been unfaithful to You, to Your calling for us as men, husbands and fathers. We have been scattered but are returning to You in obedience. Equip us to be faithful in Your sight and guide us in building this spiritual wall with hearts turned to You. Amen.

OUTLINE OF NEHEMIAH INITIATIVE STUDY:

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER & CALLING:

Nehemiah 1:2-11

- The state of the Israelites and the wall
Nehemiah 2:17-20, 4:6-18
- The state of man and the Church
Clarity in Christ, able & willing to stand firm?

REESTABLISHING JERUSALEM

- REESTABLISHING WHO WE ARE & WHOSE WE ARE

The foundation for each of the ten sections

- Ten truths or facts about Jesus the Christ
- 5 in life, 5 in death

Rebuilding the wall – 10 sections:

- God tells Moses: "Say, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
- Jesus' "I am" statements about Himself
- guidance in salvation, obedience and maturity

Rebuilding the gates – 10 gates:

- Ten spiritual disciplines
- 3 for wisdom
- 3 for discernment
- 3 for discipline
- 1 to keep on keepin' on.

GOALS OF NEHEMIAH INITIATIVE STUDY:

1. Draw closer to Jesus the Christ
2. Build a spiritual wall analogous to Nehemiah's project
3. Understand the call of conformity to Christ-likeness
4. Incorporate spiritual disciplines in a daily walk with Christ
5. Outline practical applications for battles we face in the world

LET US START REBUILDING!



"FOR NO ONE
CAN LAY ANY
FOUNDATION
OTHER THAN
THE ONE
ALREADY LAID,
WHICH IS JESUS
CHRIST."

1 Corinthians 3:11

FOUNDATION

SESSION I

SESSION I: FOUNDATION FOR EACH OF THE TEN SECTIONS OF WALL

Ten truths/facts about Jesus the Christ

FIVE IN HIS LIFE

1. Word became flesh

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD. HE WAS WITH GOD IN THE BEGINNING. ... THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND MADE HIS DWELLING AMONG US. WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, THE GLORY OF THE ONE AND ONLY, WHO CAME FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH. (John 1:1-2, 14)

This is quite different from the genealogy Matthew offered, and it reinforces Jesus' eternal presence. Jesus was before what is was, and he's going to be after what is gone. The triune God always was and always will be. As members of the body of Christ, we are part of that spiritual heritage. What else does this passage from John 1 reveal about God's plan?

2. Born of the virgin

THE VIRGIN WILL BE WITH CHILD AND WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL. (ISAIAH 7:14) AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM IN A DREAM AND SAID, "JOSEPH SON OF DAVID, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO TAKE MARY HOME AS YOUR WIFE, BECAUSE WHAT IS CONCEIVED IN HER IS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT. SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND YOU ARE TO GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS, BECAUSE HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS." (Matt. 1:20-21)

The seed of man was not part of Jesus birth. What is the significance of that?

3. Blessed by the Father

AND A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAID, "THIS IS MY SON, WHOM I LOVE; WITH HIM I AM WELL PLEASSED." (Matt. 3:17 & again in 17:5)

Jesus' baptism and blessing from His Father prepared Him for His ministry and his journey as a man in the flesh and in the world. This was a powerful validation from a Father to a Son during a key time in the Son's life.

4. Lived a sinless life

THEN JESUS WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE DESERT TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL. ... (Matt. 4:1-11)

Jesus was tempted as a man—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But He refused to be led into sin and was delivered from evil. Note that Jesus always responded, "It is written" He stood firm and reinforced God's truth. He is a perfect model for us as we face similar temptations.

5. Obedience to the cross

GOING A LITTLE FARTHER, HE FELL TO THE GROUND AND PRAYED THAT IF POSSIBLE THE HOUR MIGHT PASS FROM HIM. "ABBA, FATHER," HE SAID, "EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE FOR YOU. TAKE THIS CUP FROM ME. YET NOT WHAT I WILL, BUT WHAT YOU WILL." (Mark 14:35-36. Read also Luke 22:42 & John 17:1-5; Phil.2:5-8)

This passage shows Jesus' ultimate obedience. The original garden experience in Genesis did not go so well in this respect. But Jesus subjected His own desires to the Father's will. His example is selfless and sacrificial all the way to the cross.

Small group discussion:

Discuss these five facts about Jesus' life.

Which of the five are most meaningful to your personal walk with Christ, and why? Which have moved from head knowledge to heart-level trust for you?

Which of the facts are more difficult for you to accept or identify with at the heart level, and why?

FIVE IN HIS DEATH

1. Death to sin

JESUS SAID, "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING." ... JESUS CALLED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE, "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE BREATHED HIS LAST. (Luke 23:34 & 46)

Jesus demonstrates forgiveness beyond comprehension. We should all be blown away every day by the level of mercy He shows to us, and we should show the same forgiveness to others—hating the sin but loving the sinner. That's what He calls us to.

2. Rose from the dead

JESUS SAID, "DO NOT HOLD ON TO ME, FOR I HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO THE FATHER. GO INSTEAD TO MY BROTHERS AND TELL THEM, 'I AM RETURNING TO MY FATHER AND YOUR FATHER, TO MY GOD AND YOUR GOD.'" (John 20:17)

There were no bones in the tomb. We are new creatures because He walked out of that grave. His resurrection also opened the door to the Father. That should help us be bold as we go about our life and ministry.

3. Appeared

ON THE EVENING OF THAT FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WHEN THE DISCIPLES WERE TOGETHER, WITH THE DOORS LOCKED FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS, JESUS CAME AND STOOD AMONG THEM AND SAID, "PEACE BE WITH YOU!" AFTER HE SAID THIS, HE SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS AND SIDE. THE DISCIPLES WERE OVERJOYED WHEN THEY SAW THE LORD. AGAIN, JESUS SAID, "PEACE BE WITH YOU! AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, I AM SENDING YOU." AND WITH THAT HE BREATHED ON THEM AND SAID, "RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT." (John 20:19-22)

Jesus' appearances after His resurrection validated Who He was and all He had taught and empowered the disciples for ministry.

4. Ascended

AFTER HE SAID THIS, HE WAS TAKEN UP BEFORE THEIR VERY EYES, AND A CLOUD HID HIM FROM THEIR SIGHT. (Acts 1:9)

Having equipped His disciples, his work here was finished. He returned to the Father and made way for the next chapter in God's story, with the Holy Spirit taking center stage.

5. Will come again

"MEN OF GALILEE," THEY SAID, "WHY DO YOU STAND THERE LOOKING INTO THE SKY? THIS SAME JESUS, WHO HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM YOU INTO HEAVEN, WILL COME BACK IN THE SAME WAY YOU HAVE SEEN HIM GO INTO HEAVEN." (Acts 1:11)

The angels paint a picture for the disciples of Jesus' glorious return—which could happen on a "cloudy" day in your life.

Small group discussion:

Discuss the five facts about Jesus in His death.

Which of the five are most meaningful to your personal walk with Christ, and why? Which have moved from head knowledge to heart-level trust for you?

Which of the facts are more difficult for you to accept or identify with at the heart level, and why?

On the following map of the city walls, rate (on a scale of 1-10) the degree to which the ten facts/truths about Jesus' life and death have moved from head knowledge to heart-level trust for you. Discuss how well you relate to Christ and what the number says about your relationship with Christ.

Read the following passage and then close in prayer:
BY THE GRACE GOD HAS GIVEN ME, I LAID A FOUNDATION AS AN EXPERT BUILDER, AND SOMEONE ELSE IS BUILDING ON IT. BUT EACH ONE SHOULD BE CAREFUL HOW HE BUILDS. FOR NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE ALREADY LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. (1Cor.3:10-11)



"SO WE REBUILT THE WALL
TILL ALL OF IT REACHED HALF
ITS HEIGHT, FOR THE PEOPLE
WORKED WITH ALL THEIR
HEART. BUT WHEN SANBALLAT,
TOBIAH, THE ARABS, THE
AMMONITES AND THE PEOPLE
OF ASHDOD HEARD THAT THE
REPAIRS TO JERUSALEM'S WALLS
HAD GONE AHEAD AND THAT
THE GAPS WERE BEING CLOSED,
THEY WERE VERY ANGRY ."

Nehemiah 4:6-7

THE WALLS

SESSION II

SESSION II: **REBUILDING EACH OF THE TEN SECTIONS OF WALL**

Open in prayer: Scripture – 1Cor. 3:10-11, BY THE GRACE GOD HAS GIVEN ME, I LAID A FOUNDATION AS AN EXPERT BUILDER, AND SOMEONE ELSE IS BUILDING ON IT. BUT EACH ONE SHOULD BE CAREFUL HOW HE BUILDS. FOR NO ONE CAN LAY ANY FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE ALREADY LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. – Lord, we thank You and praise You for the foundation provided. Guide us in the building of these sections of wall. Amen.

We have laid a solid foundation on the rock. Now it's time to build on that by restoring and reinforcing the walls, which are made up of Jesus' "I am" statements. As we embrace what He means to us, we can learn to imitate His love and His sacrifice.

Reestablishing who we are as Christians

1. I AM

MOSES SAID TO GOD, "SUPPOSE I GO TO THE ISRAELITES AND SAY TO THEM, 'THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS HAS SENT ME TO YOU,' AND THEY ASK ME, 'WHAT IS HIS NAME?' THEN WHAT SHALL I TELL THEM?" GOD SAID TO MOSES, "I AM WHO I AM. THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE TO SAY TO THE ISRAELITES: 'I AM HAS SENT ME TO YOU.'" (Exodus 3:13-14)

After hearing this from Moses, the Israelites bowed down and worshipped. They were reestablished as God's chosen people.

The Exodus was on, guided by God through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night!

2. Bread of Life

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. HE WHO COMES TO ME WILL NEVER GO HUNGRY, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER BE THIRSTY." (John 6:35)

This was a peculiar statement from Jesus, as he offered eternal life and introduced an eternal perspective. From His perspective, we are supposed to be different from the temporal, the now. We should be focused on the eternal.

For example, the Holy Spirit can inspire people to forgive horrible crimes committed against themselves and their families. The world can't comprehend that approach, but sometimes that is what it means to follow Christ's example.

3. Light of the World

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL NEVER WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE." (John 8:12)

Jesus provided clarity in this world of darkness, without being of the world. And we can navigate the storms and challenges we face because of His light in our lives.

4. Gate for the sheep

"I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I AM THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP. ALL WHO EVER CAME BEFORE ME WERE THIEVES AND ROBBERS, BUT THE SHEEP DID NOT LISTEN TO THEM. I AM THE GATE; WHOEVER ENTERS THROUGH ME WILL BE SAVED. HE WILL COME IN AND GO OUT, AND FIND PASTURE. THE THIEF COMES ONLY TO STEAL AND KILL AND DESTROY; I HAVE COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL." (John 10:7-10)

Jesus is our entrance to the Kingdom, and it's a marvelous destination! Through a relationship with Him, we can be sure about where we are going.

Small group discussion:

What does 'I AM' mean to you?

How do these first three 'I am' statements from Jesus provide guidance to SALVATION?

Discuss how well you reflect:

An eternal perspective

Clarity in the world

Belonging to the Kingdom

5. Good shepherd

"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP." (John 10:11)

Jesus demonstrated a selfless, sacrificial life. Our lives should not be about self-improvement, but selfless improvement. We give up what we want, at least for a time, in order to invest in others.

6. Resurrection

"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE, EVEN THOUGH HE DIES; AND WHOEVER LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER DIE. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?" (John 11:25-26)

He calls us to a new level of belief and faith in Him, and we gain confidence to walk with boldness and perseverance. "Do you really believe that what you believe is really real?"

7. Vine

"I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE GARDENER. HE CUTS OFF EVERY BRANCH IN ME THAT BEARS NO FRUIT, WHILE EVERY BRANCH THAT DOES BEAR FRUIT HE PRUNES SO THAT IT WILL BE EVEN MORE FRUITFUL." (John 15:1-2)

Only by abiding and trusting in Him can we bear fruit. As branches, we must be connected to the vine.

8. Way

"I AM THE WAY, ..." (John 14:6)

Jesus opened the door to eternal life and peace. And

He isn't claiming to be a way, or one more option or a passing thought. He is the way.

9. Truth

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH ..." (John 14:6)

Leading with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. In a world that embraces relative truth, we must stand firm for absolute truth at every opportunity. We don't use God's Word to get our own points across; we submit to and seek out more of His wisdom, His truth. And yet we do so with mercy and grace. Jesus walked in perfect balance of truth and grace.

10. Life

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME. IF YOU REALLY KNEW ME, YOU WOULD KNOW MY FATHER AS WELL. FROM NOW ON YOU DO KNOW HIM AND HAVE SEEN HIM." (John 14:6-7)

We are called to know Him and grow in relationship with Him, and then live by a higher standard of life. There is an expectation of maturity. We should be conspicuously different from the world.

Small group discussion:

Discuss the second set of three 'I am' statements and His call to obedience.

Discuss Jesus' last three 'I am' statements and His expectations of maturity.

On a scale of 1 – 10, rate how well you:

- Embrace and reflect your SALVATION through Him _____
- Act in OBEDIENCE to Him _____
- Pursue a growing MATURITY in relationship with Him _____

REVIEWING:

On a personal level, how has the Lord been at work to guide you through the progression outlined by these "I am" statements—from salvation to obedience to maturity?

Is there any particular section of this wall that is vulnerable in your life right now?

How can you be more intentional about conforming to Christ-likeness? (See Romans 8:28-29)

Read the following passage and then close in prayer:

SO WE REBUILT THE WALL TILL ALL OF IT REACHED HALF ITS HEIGHT, FOR THE PEOPLE WORKED WITH ALL THEIR HEART. BUT WHEN SANBALLAT, TOBIAH, THE ARABS, THE AMMONITES AND THE MEN OF ASHDOD HEARD THAT THE REPAIRS TO JERUSALEM'S WALLS HAD GONE AHEAD AND THAT THE GAPS WERE BEING CLOSED, THEY WERE VERY ANGRY. THEY ALL PLOTTED TOGETHER TO COME AND FIGHT AGAINST JERUSALEM AND STIR UP TROUBLE AGAINST IT. BUT WE PRAYED TO OUR GOD AND POSTED A GUARD DAY AND NIGHT TO MEET THIS THREAT. (Nehemiah 4:6-9)



“ELIASHIB THE HIGH
PRIEST AND HIS FELLOW
PRIESTS WENT TO WORK
AND REBUILT THE SHEEP
GATE. THEY DEDICATED
IT AND SET ITS DOORS
IN PLACE, BUILDING AS
FAR AS THE TOWER OF
THE HUNDRED, WHICH
THEY DEDICATED, AND
AS FAR AS THE TOWER
OF HANANEL.”

Nehemiah 3:1

THE GATES

SESSION III

SESSION III: REBUILDING THE GATES

Open in prayer: Scripture – Neh. 3:1 & 3, ELIASHIB THE HIGH PRIEST AND HIS FELLOW PRIESTS WENT TO WORK AND REBUILT THE SHEEP GATE. THEY DEDICATED IT AND SET ITS DOORS IN PLACE,... THE FISH GATE WAS REBUILT BY THE SONS OF HASSENAAH. THEY LAID ITS BEAMS AND PUT ITS DOORS AND BOLTS AND BARS IN PLACE. – Lord, we know these gates are the primary points of vulnerability to attack. Strengthen us to build well and glorify You throughout the process. Amen.

The Israelites built the walls to re-establish that they were set apart from the surrounding peoples. We are called to be different today also, and it's all about Christ in us, moving through us. We want to be truly living for Him, reflecting His "I am" statements and conforming to His likeness. Now we start to build the gates. These are spiritual disciplines that strengthen the wall and shore up what are often the first points of attack for the enemy.

Reestablishing Whose we are - Standing firm as Christians

Wisdom for Growing Closer to the Lord

1. Prayer

NOW WHEN DANIEL LEARNED THAT THE DECREE HAD BEEN PUBLISHED, HE WENT HOME TO HIS UPSTAIRS ROOM WHERE THE WINDOWS OPENED TOWARD JERUSALEM. THREE TIMES A DAY HE GOT DOWN ON HIS KNEES AND PRAYED, GIVING THANKS TO HIS GOD, JUST AS HE HAD DONE BEFORE. (Daniel 6:10) Reference also Daniel 9:1-19, Matt. 6:9-13 & Phil.4:6-7

Prayer is perhaps our most powerful and strategic tool. So many benefits come when we are in sync with God and His purposes: protection, comfort, rest, clarity, and guidance are just some of the benefits of prayer. God does answer our prayers, and often in incredible ways.

2. Scripture

WHEN THE KING HEARD THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW, HE TORE HIS ROBES. HE GAVE THESE ORDERS TO HILKIAH THE PRIEST ... "GO AND INQUIRE OF THE LORD FOR ME AND FOR THE PEOPLE AND FOR ALL JUDAH ABOUT WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK THAT HAS BEEN FOUND. GREAT IS THE LORD'S ANGER THAT BURNS AGAINST US BECAUSE OUR FATHERS HAVE NOT OBEYED THE WORDS OF THIS BOOK; THEY HAVE NOT ACTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL THAT IS WRITTEN THERE CONCERNING US." (2Kings 22:11-13); NEITHER BEFORE NOR AFTER JOSIAH WAS THERE A KING LIKE HIM WHO TURNED TO THE LORD AS HE DID – WITH ALL HIS HEART AND WITH ALL HIS SOUL AND WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL THE LAW OF MOSES. (2Kings 23:25); Reference 2Kings 22 & 23.

Absolute Truth has relevance and power over the relativity that persists today. The Word enlightens, convicts, and strengthens us, gives us God's perspective in the midst of the world's noise, and provides light to our path. We need to be in the Word every day so we can better understand God's Truth and be guided by it every moment.

3. Fasting

WHEN I HEARD THESE THINGS, I SAT DOWN AND WEPT. FOR SOME DAYS I MOURNED AND FASTED AND PRAYED BEFORE THE GOD OF HEAVEN. (Neh.1:4); THEN JESUS WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE DESERT TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL. AFTER FASTING FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS, HE WAS HUNGRY. (Matt.4:1-2). Read also Isaiah 58.

Fasting can bring focus, cleansing, connecting, equipping, and enabling among other benefits. We deny ourselves something as a reminder that we rely on God to sustain and bless us, and we need Him more than anything in this world. Instead of eating, for example, we seek to feast on the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ.

Small group discussion:

What wisdom did Daniel, Josiah and Nehemiah gain through their practice of these disciplines.

Discuss your experiences with regular time in prayer, scripture and/or fasting.

What sin or challenging area of your life might you need to give over to God through a time of fasting and prayer?

Which gate is most vulnerable to enemy attack in your life, and what are you going to do about it?

Wisdom to Discern How to Glorify the Father**4. Worship**

COME LET US BOW DOWN IN WORSHIP, LET US KNEEL BEFORE THE LORD OUR MAKER; FOR HE IS OUR GOD AND WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF HIS PASTURE, THE FLOCK UNDER HIS CARE. (Ps.95:6-7); WORSHIP THE LORD WITH GLADNESS; COME BEFORE HIM WITH JOYFUL SONGS. (Ps.100:2)

David bowed down, danced and sang in worship for the Lord. And your posture and actions can definitely help you focus more on honoring God, but what matters most is your attitude and your focus. And it isn't only on Sundays, and it isn't only activities you normally do in church. Worship should be in everything we do, 24/7!

5. Study

FOR EZRA HAD DEVOTED HIMSELF TO THE STUDY AND OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW OF THE LORD, AND TO TEACHING ITS DECREES AND LAWS IN ISRAEL. (Ez.7:10); YOU DILIGENTLY STUDY THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE YOU THINK THAT BY THEM YOU POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE. THESE ARE THE SCRIPTURES THAT TESTIFY ABOUT ME, (John 5:39)

Ezra was focused on God and the big picture. The Pharisees were more focused on self and power. Study requires reading Scripture under the influence of the Holy Spirit, with a focus on Christ. Along with reading the Scriptures, we can grow and mature through focused study and meditation that seeks to deepen our understanding of God and our relationship with Christ.

6. Journal

The whole of scripture is effectively a journal – Moses authored/compiled the Pentateuch; Joshua chronicles his life; Psalms are mostly King David's writings and songs; Proverbs are words of wisdom from King Solomon; the Gospels reflect the disciples' journaling; the New Testament letters are like the journaled accounts of Paul and others concerning specific events and activities.

Journaling is paramount in the recording of history and connecting the past to the present. It can be extremely valuable to write down experiences and questions and then watch and listen for how God may speak to you or work in and through your life.

Small group discussion:

What discernment did David, Ezra and Solomon gain through their practice of these disciplines?

Discuss your experiences with regular time in worship, study and/or journaling.

Which gate is most vulnerable to enemy attack in your life, and what are you going to do about it?

The first three gates, or spiritual disciplines – *prayer, scripture* and *fasting* – offer **wisdom to be** in a growing, maturing relationship with the Lord. What will you commit to do in the next week to step up your practice of these disciplines?

The second three gates, or spiritual disciplines – *worship, study* and *journaling* – offer guidance to **discern what to do** to glorify the Father. What will you commit to do in the next week to step up your practice of these disciplines?

In Biblical times, the gates were the primary points of vulnerability to enemy assaults. The same is true of the gates controlling entrance and exit through the spiritual wall we have built! What assaults are you facing? Focus on a specific set of disciplines this next week and lift any assaults up in prayer to Him.

Read the following passage and then close in prayer:
DO NOT CONFORM ANY LONGER TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD'S WILL IS – HIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL. (Romans 12:2)





"THE FISH GATE
WAS REBUILT
BY THE SONS
OF HASSENAH.
THEY LAID ITS
BEAMS AND
PUT ITS DOORS
AND BOLTS
AND BARS IN
PLACE."

Nehemiah 3:3

THE GATES PART 2

SESSION IV

SESSION IV: REBUILDING THE GATES, PART 2

Open in prayer: Scripture – Neh. 13:1 & 3, ON THAT DAY THE BOOK OF MOSES WAS READ ALOUD IN THE HEARING OF THE PEOPLE AND THERE IT WAS FOUND WRITTEN THAT NO AMMONITE OR MOABITE SHOULD EVER BE ADMITTED INTO THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD. ... WHEN THE PEOPLE HEARD THIS LAW, THEY EXCLUDED FROM ISRAEL ALL WHO WERE OF FOREIGN DESCENT. – Lord, these gates require great discernment to know when they are to be open and when they are to be closed. Grant us the discipline to do what You would have us do. Amen.

As men, are we truly walking in step with Christ? Do the walls in today's church need some repairs or rebuilding? Let's continue that process with more of the gates, as we address more spiritual disciplines.

Discipline to Do: Reestablishing Whose we are - Standing firm as Christians

7. Submission

YOUR ATTITUDE SHOULD BE THE SAME AS THAT OF CHRIST JESUS: WHO, BEING IN VERY NATURE GOD, DID NOT CONSIDER EQUALITY WITH GOD SOMETHING TO BE GRASPED, BUT MADE HIMSELF NOTHING, TAKING THE VERY NATURE OF A SERVANT, BEING MADE IN HUMAN LIKENESS. AND BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT TO DEATH – EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS! (Phil. 2:5-8) Reference also Mark 14:35-36 & Hebrews 10:5-7.

Jesus led a humble, selfless, sacrificial life in submission to His Father. Focus on those words: humble, selfless, sacrificial. Don't these describe an ongoing battle for all of us in the Christian life? What are areas where you face the biggest battles between control and submission? Where do you need some "selfless improvement"?

8. Frugality

"A VOICE OF ONE CALLING IN THE DESERT, 'PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD, MAKE STRAIGHT PATHS FOR HIM.'" JOHN'S CLOTHES WERE MADE OF CAMEL'S HAIR AND HE HAD A LEATHER BELT AROUND HIS WAIST. HIS FOOD WAS LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY. (Matt.3:3-4). HOWEVER, I CONSIDER MY LIFE WORTH NOTHING TO ME, IF ONLY I MAY FINISH THE RACE AND COMPLETE THE TASK THE LORD JESUS HAS GIVEN ME – THE TASK OF TESTIFYING TO THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE. ... I HAVE NOT COVETED ANYONE'S SILVER OR GOLD OR CLOTHING. YOU YOURSELVES KNOW THAT THESE HANDS OF MINE HAVE SUPPLIED MY OWN NEEDS AND THE NEEDS OF MY COMPANIONS. (Acts 20:24, 33-34).

John the Baptist and Paul let nothing worldly get in the way of response to His call. What is your perspective on frugality in today's world? How many "wants" have you redefined as "needs"? And how much do the things of this world take you away from what is more important—ministry, family, church, and other eternal investments? Have we let cultural expectations influence our priorities? When is enough, enough?

9. Stewardship

WHEN YOU REAP THE HARVEST OF YOUR LAND, DO NOT REAP TO THE VERY EDGES OF YOUR FIELD OR GATHER THE GLEANINGS OF YOUR HARVEST. 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.19:9-10); "I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, THIS POOR WIDOW HAS PUT MORE INTO THE TREASURY THAN ALL THE OTHERS. THEY ALL GAVE OUT OF THEIR WEALTH; BUT SHE, OUT OF HER POVERTY, PUT IN EVERYTHING – ALL SHE HAD TO LIVE ON." (Mark.12:43-44). NOW TO EACH ONE THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT IS GIVEN FOR THE COMMON GOOD. (1Cor.12:7, read all of chapter 12 for context)

Biblical examples of being content, gracious and equipping. How do you practice stewardship of the physical, emotional and spiritual gifts you have been blessed with? Stewardship really comes down to where we place our trust. Are we trusting in our wealth or earning power, or are we truly trusting God for our daily bread? How you answer will guide your actions related to stewardship.

Small group discussion:

Discuss the *discipline in action* exemplified in Jesus', John's and the widow's walk.

What are your experiences with submission, frugality and/or stewardship, and where has God led you in these areas?

Which gate is most vulnerable and what are you going to do about it?

Reflecting on these three spiritual disciplines – submission, frugality and stewardship – discuss how the discipline to put these into action strengthened the early church.

What can you do to strengthen Kingdom work in your church or community?

"Keep on keepin' on":

10. Perseverance

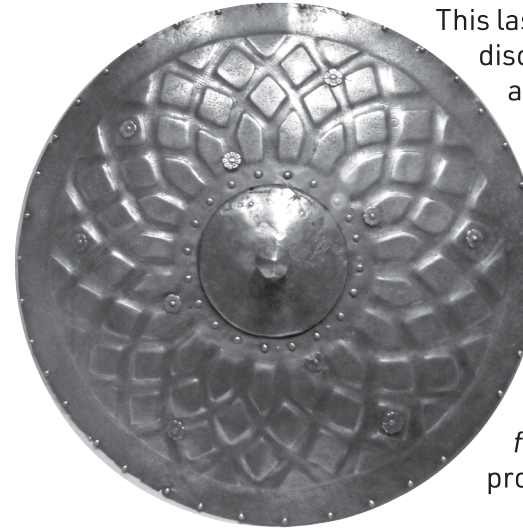
AND WE REJOICE IN THE HOPE OF THE GLORY OF GOD. NOT ONLY SO, BUT WE ALSO REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS, BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES PERSEVERANCE; PERSEVERANCE, CHARACTER; AND CHARACTER, HOPE. AND HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT US, BECAUSE GOD HAS Poured OUT HIS LOVE INTO OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM HE HAS GIVEN US. (Rom.5:2-5) THEREFORE, SINCE WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SUCH A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES, LET US THROW OFF EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS AND THE SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES, AND LET US RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR US. LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH. (Heb.12:1-2) Also reference Heb.10:19-25 and 1Tim.4:16.

Paul always persevered through the 'now' of his own circumstances. What perspective do Paul and the author of Hebrews give you on perseverance? We focus on the hope we have in Christ, and that can change our perspective on sufferings. People are watching; we need to stand strong for His kingdom despite challenges and difficulties.

Small group discussion:

Discuss the critical role of *perseverance* in Paul's admonition in Rom.5:2-5.

What experiences have you had with perseverance? How do you discern when to 'keep on keepin' on' and when not to?



This last of the ten spiritual disciplines, *perseverance*, is all about standing firm, being and doing the previous nine disciplines. In review: Gates 1-3 *prayer, scripture and fasting*, grant us '**Wisdom to be**'; Gates 4-6 *worship, study and journaling*, help us '**Discern what to do**'; and Gates 7-9 *submission, frugality and stewardship*, provide us the '**Discipline to do**'.

Again, know that in Biblical times the enemy's battle plan would focus on the gates as the most vulnerable points of the city's defense. The same is true of the gates controlling entrance and exit through the spiritual wall we have built! What do you think the enemy has identified as your most vulnerable points of defense? Focus on those points of discipline this next week and lift them up in prayer to Him.

Read the following passage and then close in prayer:
DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT IN A RACE ALL THE RUNNERS RUN, BUT ONLY ONE GETS THE PRIZE? RUN IN SUCH A WAY AS TO GET THE PRIZE. EVERYONE WHO COMPETES IN THE GAMES GOES INTO STRICT TRAINING. THEY DO IT TO GET A CROWN THAT WILL NOT LAST; BUT WE DO IT TO GET A CROWN THAT WILL LAST FOREVER. (1Cor.9:24-25). - Be in strict training to strengthen yourself in the spiritual disciplines identified.



"WHEN EVENING SHADOWS
FELL ON THE GATES OF
JERUSALEM BEFORE THE
SABBATH, I ORDERED THE
DOORS TO BE SHUT AND
NOT OPENED UNTIL THE
SABBATH WAS OVER. I
STATIONED SOME OF MY
OWN MEN AT THE GATES
SO THAT NO LOAD COULD
BE BROUGHT IN ON THE
SABBATH DAY.."

Nehemiah 13:19

REVIEW

SESSION V

SESSION V: REVIEW & WRAP UP

Open in prayer: Scripture – Neh. 2:17-18, THEN I SAID TO THEM, “YOU SEE THE TROUBLE WE ARE IN: JERUSALEM LIES IN RUINS, AND ITS GATES HAVE BEEN BURNED WITH FIRE. COME, LET US REBUILD THE WALL OF JERUSALEM, AND WE WILL NO LONGER BE IN DISGRACE.” I TOLD THEM ABOUT THE GRACIOUS HAND OF MY GOD UPON ME AND WHAT THE KING HAD SAID TO ME. THEY REPLIED, “LET US START REBUILDING.” SO THEY BEGAN THIS GOOD WORK. – Lord, I don’t know that I or men in general fully comprehend the ‘trouble we are in’ today. Nehemiah, by Your grace, conveyed well the need for reestablishment of Your people and realized whole-hearted buy-in to rebuild the wall in 445BC. Grant us the discernment of Your will for what needs to be rebuilt today and the discipline to do what You would have us do. Amen.

In 52 days, Nehemiah rebuilt the walls and reestablished Jerusalem as a secure and set-apart, holy city. No longer could people come and go as if it were any other place. This was an important first step in helping the people turn back toward God.

Foundation, walls, and gates. Let’s make sure our own personal rebuilding process truly makes a difference in our faith journey. As men, are we walking in and out of church no different from anyone else in the world? If we have been changed, let’s live like it every day.

REVIEW OF REBUILDING EFFORT:

Reestablishing Jerusalem – reestablishing who we are & Whose we are

The foundation for each of the ten sections

- Ten truths or facts about Jesus the Christ
- 5 in life, 5 in death

Rebuilding the wall – 10 sections:

- God tells Moses: “Say, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”
- Jesus’ “I am” statements about Himself
- guidance in salvation, obedience and maturity

Rebuilding the gates – 10 gates:

- Ten spiritual disciplines
 - 3 for wisdom to be in relationship
 - 3 to discern what to do
 - 3 for discipline to do what He calls you to do
 - 1 to keep on keepin’ on.

Review of *Nehemiah Initiative*:

The foundation for the spiritual wall laid down specific truths – facts about Jesus the Christ in his life and death. We challenged each other to evaluate what we accepted as knowledge about Jesus and what we embraced in a personal relationship with Him. The foundation depends on each of us embracing God’s truth in a personal relationship with Jesus. This is our **GROUNDING** in Who He is.

The rebuilding of the wall, ten sections, reflected the ‘I am’ statements Jesus made about himself. These statements also reflect His call for us to be more Christ-like each day in our walk with Him. The progression of the ‘I am’ statements mapped out a journey progressing from salvation to obedience to maturity – essentially understanding and accepting Him wholly as our Savior and committing to serve Him as our Lord. This is our **GUIDANCE** in who we are.

The rebuilding of the gates, ten gates, provided the discipline needed to stand firm in who we are and Whose we are as Christians. The ten spiritual disciplines that are represented by the gates called us to seek wisdom to be, discern what to do, be disciplined to do what we are called to do, and persevere in being and doing what He calls us to. This is our **STRENGTH** in Whose we are.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Apply and stand firm in BATTLE!

THE CHALLENGE IS TO

1. Constantly inspect the foundation for cracks.

Stand firm in the belief that Jesus was part of the trinity before what is was; move every fact to heart-level belief in Jesus the Christ

2. Routinely check the wall for gaps.

Be under the influence of the Holy Spirit to guide you in being more Christ-like every day.

3. Stay alert at each gate for attacks.

Honor the Father with a commitment to grow in each of the spiritual disciplines.

This spiritual wall gives us the opportunity to continually grow in relationship with the Lord and live as the men, husbands and fathers He calls us to be.

What is your next step?

Continue building your spiritual wall and be a Kingdom influence in family, the church and community. Discuss the practical application chart and examples provided on the following pages as a small group.

The bar is high, but as we stay GROUNDED in relationship with Jesus the Christ, seek GUIDANCE under the influence of the Holy Spirit and lean on the STRENGTH that is our Heavenly Father, we will reflect the very nature of our triune God and glorify Him one family, one church and one community at a time.

Close in prayer with Nehemiah 13:19 – IT CAME ABOUT THAT JUST AS IT GREW DARK AT THE GATES OF JERUSALEM BEFORE THE SABBATH, I COMMANDED THAT THE DOORS BE SHUT AND THAT THEY SHOULD NOT OPEN THEM UNTIL AFTER THE SABBATH. THEN I STATIONED SOME OF MY SERVANTS AT THE GATES SO THAT NO LOAD WOULD ENTER ON THE SABBATH DAY. – Lord, grant us the boldness and confidence to take action in line with what You have put on our hearts across these weeks in the building of this spiritual wall. Strengthen us in discipline to discern well and shut the gates on people or things that distract our focus on You through our eyes, mind or heart, to stand firm in who we are and Whose we are. Thank You for the clarity provided in Your word. Amen.



NEHEMIAH: Practical Application

Here are six common battles for men in today’s world, and how we can apply our wall-building truths and spiritual disciplines to help us address each one. Read and discuss the examples provided to gain understanding of how the chart below flows. Then, identify a specific battle someone in the group is in the middle of and begin working across the chart: First, inspect for cracks in the foundational relationship with Jesus the Christ (review pages 10-16); Second, check the sections of wall for gaps reflecting the journey toward Christ-likeness (review pages 20-26); Finally, evaluate alertness through the spiritual disciplines at the gates (review pages 30-46).

| BATTLE: | FOUNDATION <i>Inspect for cracks</i> | WALL <i>Check for gaps</i> | GATES <i>Alert to attacks</i> |
|----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| TRUST: | In the beginning... | Vine | Prayer/Scripture |
| FORGIVENESS: | Death to sin | Good Shepherd | Worship/Study |
| TEMPTATION: | Sinless life | Resurrection | Prayer/Fasting |
| FATHERHOOD: | Blessed by Father | Way/Truth/Life | Frugality/ Stewardship |
| CONTROL: | Obedience | Light of the World | Submission |
| B U S Y-ness: | Jesus Appeared | Bread of Life | Journal/ Persevere |

NOTES AND ACTION

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXAMPLE 1:

Jim’s TEMPTATION was pornography. It had manifested into sin in the past and it seemed to have a grip on him.

Inspect the Foundation for cracks:

Jim knew Jesus led a sinless life, but he also knew that Jesus was God. Thus his foundational relationship with Christ was cracked by unbelief until he read Paul’s account of Jesus in Philippians 2:6-7: “... who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” Jesus was 100% man when He stood against the devil’s temptations in Matthew 4:1-11. For Jim, this realization moved the head knowledge of Jesus’ sinless life to a heart-level belief and solidified his relationship with his Savior and Lord.

Check the Wall for gaps:

Jim still struggled to walk anew as he was burdened with sin of the past. There was a gap in his spiritual wall of Christ-likeness. He knew he was forgiven, but guilt had a grip on him. Then he read John 11:25-27, where Jesus had this exchange with Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies Do you believe this?’ Martha replied, ‘Yes, Lord.’” Inspired and convicted by this truth, Jim was able to put the old self to death and become a new creature in the resurrection of Christ. The gap was filled as the new man boldly stepped forward in heart-level trust.

Stay alert at the Gates:

Keeping temptation from manifesting into sin requires regular disciplines of prayer and fasting. These disciplines keep the gates secure with a focus on real relationship with Jesus and right relationship in marriage. Jim thought he could man the gates on his own, but the devil knew his points of vulnerability and the gates were breached. Now, with regular time in prayer and fasting, he experiences the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that keeps the devil’s schemes in check by His power. The gates were closed and points of vulnerability secured.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXAMPLE 2:

Fred was struggling to FORGIVE his dad for the abuse he and other family members experienced growing up. It had manifested into frustration and anger issues in his adult life.

Inspect the Foundation for cracks:

Fred knew that Jesus put sin to death on the cross – Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” In fact, Fred had embraced God’s grace and accepted Jesus as his Savior years ago. But he could not forgive his dad. Then Jesus’ example of hating the sin but loving the sinner registered with him. Jesus loved the people but hated what the devil had stirred up. Likewise, Fred realized it was the devil’s schemes at work stirring up his dad’s abusive actions. With this revelation, he sought forgiveness for judging a man he had no right to judge, and for dishonoring his father. Fred’s foundation in the Lord became Rock solid and He opened the door for a reconciled relationship with his dad.

Check the Wall for gaps:

Fred still struggled to forgive and forget. The pain was real! Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” This selfless, sacrificial life Jesus led is the life He calls us to. Fred realized it was not about his dad; it was about him. It was in fact selfish of him to harbor these thoughts toward his dad. He was, in effect, continuing to judge his dad, and he used that to justify for his own selfishness, frustration and anger in his marriage. He even caught himself being verbally abusive on more than one occasion. This was a huge gap in Fred’s wall of Christ-likeness. But he committed himself to rebuilding this section of wall back to its full height and being “conformed to the likeness of His Son.” (Rom.8:29). Fred rebuked past actions and stood firm against any negative influence they try to have on his present relationships. His daily focus on “selfless improvement” is helping him become the Good Shepherd of his family.

Stay alert at the Gates:

Fred’s mind will sometimes drift back to the days when his dad was abusive. This is one of the devil’s best schemes – to replay tapes of the past and suggest that it’s impossible to forgive that person or those people. This happens when the worship and study gates are not secured. As Fred turns his eyes back on the Lord and studies His word, specifically Matthew 18:25-35, he regains a broader perspective. When compared with what the Lord has forgiven Fred for throughout his life, extending forgiveness to his dad is minor. When he feels unable to forgive, Fred finds strength in Christ to forgive as he is called to. The gates are closed and points of vulnerability secured.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXAMPLE 3:

John was not prepared for FATHERHOOD. He had grown up in a single-parent home with his mom and sisters. There was little to no contact with his dad through his twenties. Now he is a dad trying to figure out what his wife and kids expect of him.

Inspect the Foundation for cracks:

There were cracks, even large fissures in John's relationship with his dad due to his absence. That confusion was carried forward into his image of the Heavenly Father. He got Jesus but could not get his arms around the Son's relationship with His Father. Then he read the account of Jesus' baptism when the Father said, *"This is My Son, whom I love. With whom I am well pleased."* – The Father blessed His Son with affirmation of Who He was and Whose He was, and encouraged Him for the journey ahead. John, referencing Romans 8:16-17, realized that as a child of God, an heir of God and co-heir with Jesus the Christ, he could embrace the blessing of the Father and walk boldly forward as a son of the Most-High God. And as a son, he could become the father his wife and kids need. A fissure was filled with the love of the Father over John as a father.

Check the Wall for gaps:

John had experienced the Light of Christ through valleys in his life. He knew Jesus as his Savior but that was all the further the relationship had gone. As he checked the wall for gaps, the sections for the Way, the Truth and the Life were not to their full height. He had not matured in his relationship with Jesus. He was convicted by John 14:6 where He told Phillip, *"If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well."* This proved to be a significant breach in the wall and his ability to be the father he was called to be. John committed himself to rebuilding this section of wall and to being the Father's representative in his Home. John took a solid step forward in Christ-likeness wanting his kids to know the Lord because they know him.

Stay alert at the Gates:

John's confidence as a dad was still fragile. It seemed a voice constantly whispered, "You are not a good dad and never will be a good dad because you did not have a dad." When the suggestion was made to practice spiritual disciplines, that just sounded too religious. But now the vision of gates unmanned allowed him to see how vulnerable he was - the devil could drop discouragement into his mind at will. As John started to read and study scripture on a regular basis, he learned what submission to the Father meant. Upon submission, the Father's words, *"This is My son, whom I love and with whom I am well pleased,"* are received at the heart-level and affirm that he, as a father can indeed become the dad he is called to be. Now when some doubt around his FATHERHOOD tries to enter his mind, John goes to the word of God - the gates are closed and points of vulnerability are secured.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXAMPLE 4:

When it came to TRUST, he thought he had surrendered his will to God. But now, Jason and his wife were guilty of worry and anxiety over their two grown children.

Inspect the Foundation for cracks:

Jason felt he knew who Jesus was – He was born of the virgin, lived a sinless life, died and rose from the dead. When he gave that answer to his pastor when asked, the pastor asked again if he knew Jesus. Then the pastor made his point, he asked if he had read Jesus' book, the Bible. The charge was given – If Jason really wanted to know Jesus, he would have to read His book. The methodology was to start with Romans and read through Jude. Then read through the gospels and Acts. It was in the first chapter of the gospel of John that he was given a new perspective. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."* A crack in the foundational relationship with Jesus the Christ that allowed a worldly perspective to distract from an eternal perspective was identified and closed.

Check the Wall for gaps:

Even with an eternal perspective on life, it was hard to watch the kids struggle. It seemed so much harder to raise a family these days than when he and his wife had raised their kids. Jason wanted to be available to help. It moved quickly from being available to being needed several times a week. While being needed was revitalizing to some degree, it progressed to a dependency upon his availability and willingness to stand in the gap. In reading John 15:1-2, Jason realized this was an unhealthy dependency. The gap he was standing in was a section of wall he had left in disrepair. It was where the Gardener wanted to do some pruning if Jason would abide and trust in Him.

Stay alert at the Gates:

It still was not easy to watch the kids struggle when he knew he could step in and help fix the issue. When he looked at the state of his gates, he realized how he had drifted from his discipline of daily time in prayer and scripture. The devil used the opening to attack his pride as a super dad. When he committed time to pray specifically for the kids, the Lord opened his eyes to the valleys he had been through in life and how God had used those experiences to shape him for other highs and lows he would face. While he was trying to be a super dad, he was actually not trusting God to do the same for his kids. New boundaries were established for the parent / grown child relationships as both dad and mom learned to let go and let God be God. The gates representing time in prayer and scripture were closed and points of vulnerability were secured. TRUST in the Father rebuked the worry and anxiety the devil was using in his attack on the gates.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXAMPLE 5:

Being in CONTROL had served him well in business. It was a natural extension, he thought, to carry the same mindset into his home. It was his way or the highway, until the highway became a real option.

Inspect the Foundation for cracks:

Jack's son was turning sixteen and their relationship was strained. They were as different as a father and son could be. Jack was athletic and an outdoors guy while his son was not into sports and preferred the indoors. Tensions were high because expectations were high, and Jack was a believer in discipline. He knew something had to change or he was going to lose his son. When he checked in on his foundational relationship with Jesus the Christ, Jack realized he accepted Jesus' obedience to His Father as fact but had not thought about the heart-level meaning. When Jesus asked His Father if He would take the cup from Him, He let go of control and said, *"Yet not what I will, but what You will."* – Mark 14:36. Jack understood he had to stop trying to control his son and focus on raising a godly young man. Embracing obedience firmed up Jack's foundational relationship with Jesus and his son.

Check the Wall for gaps:

While the relationship improved when Jack stopped trying to make his son into his image, he was getting frustrated with what he saw as a lack of drive. One of Jesus' 'I am' statements came to mind – *"I am the Light of the world."* – John 8:12. Jesus had provided Light to his path as a young man but he had taken it for granted. Jack saw a gap in his wall of Christ-likeness that needed to be rebuilt to its full height. As Jack began to guide his son in the Light, darkness was dissipated. Both drew comfort in God's sovereignty and confidence was instilled in his son. He knew the Lord had a plan for his unique gifts.

Stay alert at the Gates:

The plan was for his son to go to college and be an engineer like his dad. College had been emphasized from an early age and even though high school had been challenging, Jack and his wife were sure their son would do well at the next level. Pushback on this issue would not be tolerated. College application deadlines passed and graduation was only a few months away. Tension was high in the home. One evening, the son informed his parents that he had enlisted in the Marines. He explained his reasoning and the opportunities the military offered. He said he had been praying the last couple of months about the right next step for him and had been led to this decision. Jack realized his son was not asking for permission but for his blessing. Jack finally let go of CONTROL. The gate representing the spiritual discipline of submission was closed and a point of vulnerability to evil was secured.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION EXAMPLE 6:

Ron was determined to have a good marriage and family and to live above the poverty line he had grown up below. BUSY-ness was part of the deal and no problem for him.

Inspect the Foundation for cracks:

Ron had been baptized as an infant and went through confirmation as a kid. He had prayed a lot when he was younger, but as an adult, he focused more on getting his college degree and progressing in his career. Now, married and with kids, he started attending church again. He realized that what he knew about Christ had simply been accepted as part of the religion his family had practiced. To take a step forward in relationship with Jesus, he had to admit it was hard to comprehend a dead man walking out of a tomb. It was in his head as knowledge but had not moved to a heart-level understanding. Then he read John 20:19-22 where Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, and verse 28 when Thomas said, *"My Lord and my God!"* Ron's heart was stirred and a crack in his foundational relationship with Jesus the Christ that allowed doubt to exist was identified and closed.

Check the Wall for gaps:

The focus for his family was on financial security. Ron worked long hours, traveled days at a time and made good money. He invested well, established college funds for the kids and was building up a 401K for retirement. Family time was pushed down on the priority list. Missing kids' activities became more the rule than the exception. There was tension in the marriage and home. From his perspective, he was doing what he could do. But Jesus said, *"I am the Bread of Life."* - John 6:35. Ron understood there was a section of wall he had left in disrepair. It was Jesus' call and expectation for men to focus on the eternal, not temporal. Ron rebuilt the wall to its full height and got the priorities of marriage and family right back where they belonged, just below becoming more Christ-like today than yesterday.

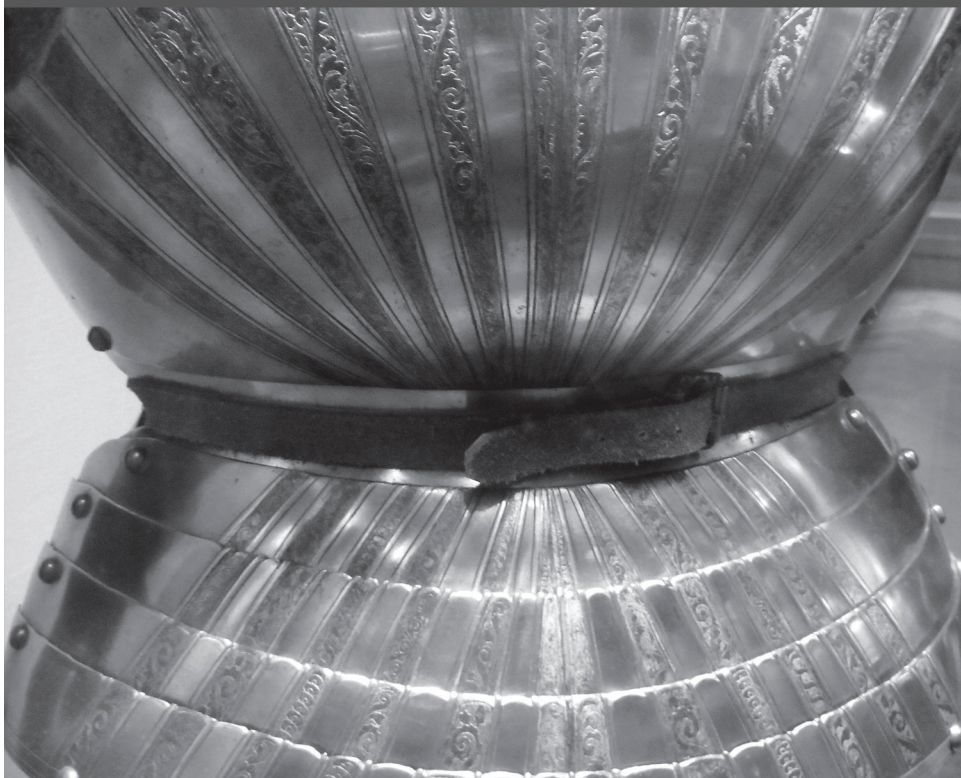
Stay alert at the Gates:

Ron's sense of self-worth was still tied up in staying busy. He had heard sermons grounded in Romans 5:2-5, that perseverance builds character so he felt good about where he was at. Then his pastor asked how he knew he was persevering in the right things. Ron did not have an answer. The pastor said, "Wouldn't it be terrible if a man spent his life chopping down trees only to realize he had been working in the wrong forest?" The spiritual disciplines needed to make sure effort and focus are on the right stuff include time in scripture, prayer and journaling. Then perseverance will serve to have a Kingdom influence in this world. The gates representing time in prayer, scripture, journaling and perseverance were closed and points of vulnerability were secured. BUSY-ness was rebuked as Ron turned his efforts and focus to the right stuff.

“STAND FIRM
THEN, WITH
THE BELT OF
TRUTH BUCKLED
AROUND
YOUR WAIST,
WITH THE
BREASTPLATE OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS
IN PLACE”

Eph.6.14

BATTLE PLAN



BATTLE PLAN

Development of: *In reflection, I realize*

My strengths are:

My weaknesses are:

I am particularly vulnerable in the area of:

I need help with:

I commit to:

Gentlemen, life will knock us down at times, but the world needs men and dads to step up. God can use us to make a difference for Him in this world!

It is not about going out now and *doing* Christian manhood. It's about *being* a Christian man, staying in the lifetime journey with Christ, and growing in that relationship day by day.

In Ezekiel chapter 36, God speaks through His prophet and says: "I WILL GIVE YOU A NEW HEART AND PUT A NEW SPIRIT IN YOU; I WILL REMOVE FROM YOU YOUR HEART OF STONE AND GIVE YOU A HEART OF FLESH. AND I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT IN YOU AND MOVE YOU TO FOLLOW MY DECREES AND BE CAREFUL TO KEEP MY LAWS. THEN YOU WILL LIVE IN THE LAND I GAVE YOUR ANCESTORS; YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD" (26-28).

If we are His people, we have been radically changed inside, and that change should be evident in all we say and do. So ... inspect your foundation. Check your walls for gaps. Stay alert at your gates. Continue to listen to and pursue God, and be obedient to what He tells you.

Nehemiah Commitment:

I commit to being a Modern-Day Cup Bearer for my family – to evaluate and approve all worldly influences that knock on the door, show up on the television, arrive in the mail, land in an inbox, appear on the computer or distract via the cell phone.



I confess that the world has had a greater influence on me and my family than we have had for the Kingdom in this world. I accept the charge to complete the spiritual wall, to routinely ***inspect the Foundation for cracks, check the Wall for gaps*** and ***stay alert at the Gates***. I will stand firm on the battlefield for fathers & family and be a Kingdom influence in this world.

Signed this day _____



BATTLE PLAN



FOUNDATION: I will constantly check the foundation for cracks and stand firm in relationship with Jesus the Christ.

I will stay well **GROUND**ED by -

WALL: I will routinely check the wall for gaps and be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

I will seek **GUIDANCE** continually by -

GATES: I will stay alert at each gate for attacks, growing in the spiritual disciplines to honor the Father.

I will lean on His **STRENGTH**, not my own by -

I claim who I am and Whose I am as a Christian man. I accept responsibility to conform more to the likeness of His Son, Jesus the Christ each day. I will seek wisdom to be His man where I am physically, emotionally and spiritually; discern what it is He calls me to do; and be disciplined to persevere on the journey.

I will establish accountability through weekly fellowship and study with a group of battle buddies initially by reflecting back on this study, then reading the book of Nehemiah one chapter at a time.

Signature: _____

Witnesses: _____



YES! I commit to becoming a **faithful father** – a dad that prioritizes his physical presence, is engaged emotionally and leads spiritually by example.

I also want to be a blessing to other fathers and families through Faithful Fathering. I will support the Initiative through my:

- Prayer**
- Time** / Volunteer to introduce the Initiative in my church
- Talent**, please contact me (Marketing, Board service, fundraising, etc.)
- Network** / Connections
- Treasure** / Donation*
- * - Amount \$ _____
- One-time Gift Monthly Gift
- Check is enclosed

Please bill my: AmExp, Visa, Mastercard

Name on card: _____

Card # _____

CVV# _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature: _____

On-line giving is available via the website: www.faithfulfathering.org

Please complete the back side as well, detach and mail to:

Faithful Fathering
P.O. Box 1702
Sugar Land, Texas 77487-1702

Please take a few moments to provide information on how you utilized this study guide and any other comments you have on the content or how the study impacted you personally:

- I worked through this study on my own
 I did this study with a group of men at work
 I participated in this study with a group of men at church
 I got this book as part of a study at my church
 I would like to continue the Initiative with a core group of dads

Comments and/or reflections on the Nehemiah Initiative:

You can also email any additional thoughts/comments to:
admin@faithfulfathering.org

Personal information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: hm/ce: _____

Email: _____

- I'd like to receive FF's weekly "Dad Talk" email communication

Home church: _____

FAITHFUL FATHERING

Mission: ENCOURAGING AND EQUIPPING DADS TO BE FAITHFUL FATHERS. A FAITHFUL FATHER PRIORITIZES HIS PHYSICAL PRESENCE, IS ENGAGED EMOTIONALLY AND LEADS SPIRITUALLY BY EXAMPLE.

Vision: Engage dads in raising a godly generation

p. 281.491.DADS (3237)
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Why a Nehemiah Initiative?

Nehemiah was convicted that the state of the Israelites was directly related to the state of the Holy City. The report from his brother was, "The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."- Neh.1:3. The people were walking in and out of the Holy City as if it were no different than the surrounding lands. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah inspected the wall and reported to the people, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.' I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work." - Neh.2:17-18.

Nehemiah was convinced that once the people began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, they would be reminded of the significance the Holy City had as a dwelling place for His name. They established the foundation, rebuilt the wall, built and set the gates in place and reestablished Jerusalem as the Holy City in 52 days!

It is significant to see the wall not as a wall of isolation, though that is certainly an understandable connotation, but rather as a wall of delineation – a reestablishment of the Holy City and a reestablishment of the Israelites as the chosen people of God. The City and the people were to be different than the surrounding lands.

The Nehemiah Initiative is a study for men that visits the physical construction of the wall in 445 BC and draws parallels to the spiritual wall men need in life to be different in this world. In five sections this study will lay the foundation of relationship; build walls of Christ-likeness; construct gates of spiritual discipline; and discuss practical applications for battles men face today. This spiritual wall will provide men with the structure to continually grow in relationship with the Lord and live as the men, husbands and fathers the Father expects us to be.

"Rick Wertz is a dear friend and a brother in Christ. He is a veteran of spiritual wars, a trailblazer for our Lord and has the spiritual maturity to spend time on the mountain top with the Father so he can endure the valleys of ministry and lead men in a godly manner. Faithful Fathering has been forged from these fires of combat. He is the real deal and personifies 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 as a godly man. His motivation to teach and write is the direct result of the overflow of his love for our Lord. Since he has 'been there, done that and has the t-shirt,' listen and learn from what he shares in this Nehemiah Initiative."

Buddy Griffin, Pastor of Men