A pair of hands is shown from the bottom, cupping a small, young plant with several leaves. The plant is growing out of a small mound of soil. The entire scene is set against a blue background with a subtle rain effect. A large, orange, circular graphic element, resembling a stylized 'C' or a partial ring, frames the central image and text.

LIVE *it* WELL

one life. one story to tell.

**NEHEMIAH SERIES
7-WEEK STUDY GUIDE**



JACOB'S WELL
CHURCH

LIVE *it* WELL

A GUIDE THROUGH THE WINTER MESSAGES 2017

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**This booklet is a guide in which to take weekend message notes, participate in daily devotions and quiet time on your own, as well as a group guide for you and your group to use each week.*

THE BOOK OF **NEHEMIAH**

Nehemiah is a book about leadership, vision and prayer. It is a book about restoring a community that had been torn apart by war, injustice, poverty, spiritual lethargy and corrupt leadership. It challenges each of us to ask: "How will I live my life? Will I live for myself, treating my life as something I own, to be used for my purposes and comfort? Or will I see my life as something given by God; that I am a steward who is meant to live for the purposes and pleasure of God, in service to Him and to humanity?"

Nehemiah is the perfect book for us to walk through as we begin **LIVE IT WELL**. We each have been given one life to live. **LIVE IT WELL** is a call to stewardship born from being a follower of Jesus. This leads us to a life of meaning and purpose as we experience God in the work He is doing. The next two months will determine the direction of our church for the immediate and long-term future. So as a people we need to pray, seek God and study His Word together. As part of **LIVE IT WELL** we will call people to deepen their commitment to follow Jesus through prayer, devotional life, financial commitment and by making their everyday life an opportunity to live for God and His purposes and plans. I am so excited to take the next steps together on our journey to know and become like Christ. Let's **LIVE IT WELL!**

HISTORICAL

BACKGROUND

The people of God, the Jews of Judea, had been in captivity in the Babylonian and the Persian Empires. The Babylonians had conquered Judea and took large parts of the population into captivity in three waves. The most skilled, gifted and educated were taken to serve the needs of the empire, leaving a vacuum of leadership in Jerusalem. Eventually the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem, tearing down its wall and even destroying the temple. Other conquered people were transplanted into the land and they intermarried with those Jews who were left behind. These were the ancestors of the Samaritans. They were half Jews and would be despised by those full Jews who would return from captivity. This continued all the way to the time of Jesus.

The Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied that the people who were fortunate were actually those taken into captivity, because God would preserve and even prosper them in captivity and, at the appointed time, would restore them to the land, rebuilding the city and the temple. From them would come the promised Messiah.

At the beginning of the book of Nehemiah, the people of God had been restored to their land in 538 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar). The temple had been rebuilt in 515 B.C. The threat of the annihilation of the Jews was thwarted by the work of Esther and Mordecai in 474–473 B.C. Ezra had returned in 458 B.C. to restore the law to its rightful place among the people of God. Yet to be restored was Jerusalem, the Holy City.

There was no security in Jerusalem because the city did not have a wall. The leaders were ineffective and even corrupt. The people were impoverished and in some cases sold into slavery. Worship in the temple was inconsistent and the Word of God was ignored and forgotten. Families were falling apart as the culture was pulling

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NEXT PAGE**

young people into relationships with those who did not know or follow the ways of God. The people were dominated and oppressed by warlords in the region who actively worked to keep the people weak and vulnerable in order to protect and consolidate their own power. The ways of God were left behind as the people in the city struggled to simply survive.

Nehemiah was a man of character who loved and feared God. He was a high-ranking official in the Persian king's court. Nehemiah was a person of prayer who risked his life of power, privilege and luxury to bring stability, reform and spiritual awakening to the people of Jerusalem. He was a person who understood that his life belonged to God and he lived his life for the pleasure and purposes of God.

Through the leadership of Nehemiah, God rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem, allowing the leaders to bring both social reform and spiritual awakening. This allowed Jerusalem to grow into a great city and preserved the line of Abraham so that God's promise to Israel could be fulfilled: to Jerusalem would come the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Nehemiah is an excellent example of a person who lived his life well. He was asked to make great sacrifices and to lead in very confused times, much like ours. He will be a wonderful example as we strive to **LIVE IT WELL.**

HOW TO HAVE A DAILY DEVOTIONAL TIME

At Jacob's Well we believe that each person should individually spend daily time with God while at the same time engaging in consistent community in a group for discussion and group prayer. Why do we believe that having a regular time with God is so important? We believe that wherever we are on our journey, we need to take steps together to know and become like Jesus. To know Jesus, we must deepen and strengthen our relationship with Him. To become like Him, we must know Him in relationship.

We are all different. Each of us will have our own unique relationship with God. For this reason, it is important to understand that there is not one specific devotional pathway that will be a perfect fit for each person. Take time to discover the time of day and place that helps you feel most connected with God.

Some Suggestions for Your Quiet Time:

- Establish a time of day and specific place to begin.
- As you sit with God, start by becoming quiet. You can do this through a few deep breaths. Make sure your phone is in another room. Turn off the television and do your best to remove distractions.
- Sometimes it helps to have a pad of paper next to you. If distractions come, write them down so that you can work through them later. For example, if you remember you need to do something, make yourself a note so that you can let it go during your time with God.
- Start with a prayer asking God to open your heart to Him and His message.
- Jacob's Well is providing you this Nehemiah resource which will guide you in choosing Scripture passages and lead you through your quiet time with God.
- As you finish your time, be silent and wait for a little bit to see how God works in your heart and mind. Don't rush away. You might miss something He is trying to say to you.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what God might be speaking to you through the Scriptures and the teachings on Nehemiah.
- End your time in prayer, expressing Praise, Confession, Prayers for others and Prayers for yourself and your family.

Some Suggestions as You Prepare for Small Group

- If you do not complete all of your devotions for the week, please still attend your group.
- For groups meeting early in the week, your group will discuss the message and prepare to learn through the devotions. Perhaps you will want to discuss the previous week's devotions if applicable. For groups meeting later in the week, your group will discuss the message as well as what you have learned in the devotions.
- Encourage everyone to participate. Please don't allow one group member to do all the talking.
- Be respectful. Listen and remember not to counsel one another. Make prayer a priority.

Believe God. He desires to deepen our relationship with Him as individuals, as group members and as a church. This is going to be a very exciting time. As God works, take notes and be ready to share your stories. We want God to receive all the glory for what He is about to do in us and through us as we study Nehemiah together!

Verses for Memory

1 Timothy 6:6-7

But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.

1 Corinthians 4:1

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

“Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹²Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name. Amen



WEEK 1

JANUARY 21 & 22, 2017

“BROKEN”

NEHEMIAH 1:1–2:1

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ²that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

Nehemiah's Prayer

⁴As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷We have acted very corruptly

against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

²¹Now I was cupbearer to the king.

NEHEMIAH 1:1 – 2:1

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>



GROUPS MATERIAL

OPEN WITH PRAYER

Please read Nehemiah Chapter 1 out loud as a group.

1. The Israelites' situation drove Nehemiah to weep and mourn for days. Why do you think this was? What does this show you about his character?
2. Just as Nehemiah was broken by the Israelites' situation, whose brokenness breaks you? Why?
3. Read Luke 19:41-44. Does it surprise you that Jesus was also broken? Maybe you have thought about His broken body on the cross, but have you taken time to contemplate how our brokenness is what drove Him there? Talk about this as a group.
4. How does praying Scripture and remembering God, His character, His promises, and the inheritance we have in Him help us move forward in His purposes and plans after we encounter brokenness?
5. It is vital to remember that God is always about the work He is doing in us. We can fall into the temptation of thinking we are better than the brokenness around us. Exposing us to the brokenness of others lets God heal our brokenness as much as theirs. Talk about this truth as a group.
6. What is your understanding of corporate repentance? Do you think corporately we should ask forgiveness for past sins and current injustices? If not, why? If so, how would this affect our prayer life?
7. What specific part of Nehemiah's reliance on God encourages you? Do you see how ordinary people, who depend on God, can do the extraordinary together for God's Kingdom?

End your time together in prayer. One suggestion is to pray Psalm 10:12-18.



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.

Some examples for Question #2... Broken relationships? Unforgiveness? Lives impacted by divorce, sexual immorality, greed, materialism, drugs or alcohol? People broken by poverty, famine or disease? Leaders who lack character, goodness and care for the people they lead? The elderly left alone and forgotten? Widows? Orphans? Lives taken by suicide or abortion? People overcome by natural disasters or disasters created by their own hand? Those suffering from mental illness, those diagnosed with cancer or another illness? People trapped in human trafficking, or bound in addiction? Whose brokenness breaks you? Why?

When we are broken over the hurt in our world, we have a choice to make. Some of the choices we can make are... Will we become numb to the need? Will we become overwhelmed and give in to despair? Will we ignore the hurt and soothe it with earthly desires? Will we pray? Will we seek God?

As followers of Christ, we need to learn from Nehemiah's example and seek God first. One of the reasons we must seek God first is that many human emotions rise to the surface when we are exposed to sadness. Fear, insecurity, anger, and blame can quickly take us off track and away from the purposes of God. Going to God in prayer allows His Wisdom to fill our heart and mind. Instead of walking away in apathy or anxiety we worship. We trust that He is in control. We recognize that before God does something through us He has something to do in us. We understand that He is working in us, around us, and through us. Being a part of the solution to the brokenness we have been exposed to reaches us as we surrender all we are feeling to God in prayer. Only He has the answers we seek and Nehemiah knew this.



MONDAY JANUARY 23, 2017

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4.

As we begin to study Nehemiah together as a church family, these first verses reveal his heart. He is immediately vulnerable before us, overcome with the news he received from his brother and the men from Jerusalem. The Israelites' situation drove him to weep and mourn for days. Why do you think this was? What does this show you about his character?

Just as Nehemiah was broken over the devastation in Jerusalem, we too should be broken over the devastation in our world. When was the last time you heard of another person's or people's suffering and wept over the news?

What breaks you? Broken relationships? Unforgiveness? Lives impacted by divorce, sexual immorality, greed, materialism, drugs or alcohol? People broken by poverty, famine or disease? Leaders who lack character, goodness and care for the people they lead? The elderly left alone and forgotten? Widows? Orphans? Lives taken by suicide or abortion? People overcome by natural disasters or disasters created by their own hand? Those suffering from mental illness, those diagnosed with cancer or another illness? People trapped in human trafficking, or bound in addiction? Whose brokenness breaks you?

Why?

Read Luke 19:41-44. Does it surprise you that Jesus was also broken? Maybe you have thought about His broken body on the cross, but have you taken time to contemplate how our brokenness is what drove Him there? Ponder on this for a little while.

Following Christ and His example opens our hearts to the hurting. If you realize you are not prompted with a heart of concern for a person, people or brokenness in our world, ask God to open your heart and eyes. Ask Him to move and stir you out of complacency. Pray against apathy. Call out to God, and ask Him to soften your heart. Pray for the people of our church. Ask God to work in each one of us, making us attentive and responsive to who He is leading each of us to care for in our broken world.

TUESDAY JANUARY 24, 2017

Read Nehemiah 1:4-6.

When we are broken over the hurt in our world, we have a choice to make. Will we become numb to the need? Will we become overwhelmed and give in to despair? Will we ignore the hurt and soothe it with earthly desires? As we study Nehemiah, it is important that we recognize his reaction. Nehemiah mourned, fasted and prayed before doing anything else. What is your reaction when you see brokenness and hurting people in your midst? What is your response when you hear stories of brokenness? What do you do?

If you find yourself not caring, ask God to work in you to show you why. We are exposed to so much through television, movies, and social media. Does the constant attention leave you emotionless? What keeps you from caring?

If you find you are overwhelmed with the need, open your Bible to Psalm 10. Reword the psalm so that it becomes your own prayer, especially verses 12-18.

As followers of Christ, we need to learn from Nehemiah's example and seek God first. One of the reasons we must seek God first is that many human emotions rise to the surface when we are exposed to sadness. Fear, insecurity, anger, and blame can quickly take us off track and away from the purposes of God. Going to God in prayer allows His wisdom to fill our hearts and minds. Instead of walking away in apathy or anxiety, we worship. We trust that He is in control. We recognize that before God does something through us He has something to do in us. We understand that He desires to work in us, around us, and through us. Being part of the solution to the brokenness we have been exposed to can reach us as we surrender all that we are feeling to God in prayer. Only He has the answers we seek, and Nehemiah knew this well.

Take time to sit alone with God today. Talk to Him about what breaks you. Share with Him all of the feelings that rise up in you. It is vital to remember God is always about the work He is doing in us. Don't fall into the temptation of thinking you are better than the brokenness around you. Exposing us to the brokenness of others lets God heal our own brokenness as much as theirs. Look to God for His wisdom, direction, purpose and plans as you pray.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 25, 2017

Read Nehemiah 1:6-10.

In these verses Nehemiah confesses the sins of the Israelites as a whole community, including those of his father and his father's family. In our lives, how do we acknowledge and ask for forgiveness individually as well as corporately as a people of God?

If we are honest, it can be difficult to ask for forgiveness for corporate disobedience. It is hard enough to ask for forgiveness for our individual sin, and much more so the sins of our church, community, nation, and world. Nehemiah knew, though, that the Israelites were unfaithful and God was fulfilling the consequences He had warned them of ahead of time. Nehemiah realized that they all needed to come before God with prayers of repentance. Daniel also recognized the need for corporate prayers of repentance. Read Daniel 9:3-19.

Have you ever experienced a time of corporate prayers of repentance? Nehemiah's and Daniel's examples are ones we need to remember. Our culture places focus on individuals and individual achievement. Not only that, but it places blame accordingly. We would do well as a people of God to move away from this mindset. What if we began to pray and ask forgiveness for places in which human beings hurt other human beings, even if we played no direct part? For example, ponder on historical sins of our nation. Past systems and structures permitted slavery and racism. The government condoned injustice toward Native Americans as well as discrimination against African Americans and women. When we prayerfully consider the past, what benefits do we experience today that trace back to experiences of brokenness in others? How would these injustices be expressed in a corporate prayer?

Read Luke 23:34a: "And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Even from the cross, Jesus prayed prayers of forgiveness for us. When we see evil and brokenness in the world, prayers of repentance for the people causing the brokenness, as well as for ourselves, keeps our hearts soft and responsive to God.

Take time to write a prayer of repentance, using the verses from Nehemiah and Daniel as an example. Pray for forgiveness for the church, community, state, nation and world, for all of the sins that still create injustices today. We all have culpability for the human injustices that still occur. Ask God for forgiveness for how hurtful humans can be. Ask God to help you continue to grow as a person of character and integrity. Our church, community, state, nation and world are desperate for people of character and integrity who move past condemnation and blame and land instead on forgiveness and service in Jesus' name. As you write your prayer, consider how God might have you play a role in making our world a better place.

THURSDAY JANUARY 26, 2017

Read Nehemiah 1:11

As Nehemiah cried out to God, He remembered God's character, God's promises, and the inheritance he had as God's child. The Bible is filled with scriptures on these points. Take some time to contemplate the following verses, sharing with God in prayer as you reflect over just a few examples:

From the Old Testament:

Numbers 23:19 "A Reminder of God's Character"

¹⁹God is not man, that he should lie,
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.
Has he said, and will he not do it?
Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?

2 Samuel 22:31-33 "A Reminder of God's Promises"

³¹This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.
³²"For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a rock, except our God?
³³This God is my strong refuge
and has made my way blameless.

Isaiah 26:3 "A Reminder of Our Inheritance"

³You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you.

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NEXT PAGE

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 27, 2017: (CONT)**From the New Testament:****Matthew 11:28-30 "A Reminder of God's Character"**

²⁸Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

1 Corinthians 2:9 "A Reminder of God's Promises"

⁹But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"

Ephesians 3:20 "A Reminder of Our Inheritance"

²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.

FRIDAY JANUARY 27, 2017

Read Nehemiah 2:1

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king. He was an ordinary man who believed God for greater things.

1. How does this inspire you? Write your thoughts here:

In this verse we learn that four months had passed since Nehemiah first heard the news about the condition of the walls in Jerusalem. For four months Nehemiah waited on God, praying and seeking God's will and plans. This time was a defining moment in Nehemiah's life. He knew that God was challenging him to take a risk, and because Nehemiah sought God for four months in order to wrap his heart and mind around God's plans, when the time came he was ready.

2. How does Nehemiah's integrity speak to you today?
3. What specific part of Nehemiah's patient preparation and reliance on God encourages you?
4. Do you see how ordinary people who depend on God can do the extraordinary together for God's Kingdom?

As human beings, we want our lives to have purpose and meaning. We want to live for something bigger than ourselves. As you spend time alone with God, talk to Him about your own life. Share with Him your desires for your life to have meaning and purpose in Him. Pray about His purposes for Jacob's Well. Ask what He has planned for each of us as individuals as well as each of us together as His body of believers.

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.



WEEK 2

JANUARY 28 & 29, 2017

“PERSPECTIVE”
NEHEMIAH 2:1-8

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ²And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. ³I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" ⁴Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it." ⁶And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?"

So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. ⁷And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

NEHEMIAH 2:1-8

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>





GROUPS MATERIAL

OPEN WITH PRAYER

1. The question we must ask ourselves as we learn Nehemiah is, "What made him different? What propelled him toward God and a life of meaning in Him?" After listening to the sermon this past weekend, how would you describe Nehemiah's perspective?
2. 1 Corinthians 4:1 is one of the memory verses for this series: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." What do you think it means to live as a steward? What do you think it means to live as an owner? Talk about this as a group.
3. Nehemiah's perspective as a steward pushed him to take steps of faith. He took risks instead of protecting himself by playing it safe. As a group, share if you find yourself taking steps of faith and risk in God or playing it safe. Why?
4. If we live our lives as owners, God will become distant. It is only with the perspective of a steward, as Nehemiah had, that we more fully experience what God has for us. Maybe you find yourself saying, "I want to experience God, but I don't want it to cost me too much." Living with a stewardship perspective allowed Nehemiah to give all he had. He gave everything to ensure for God's people the safety and security they needed through the experience of rebuilding the wall together. What walls, literally or figuratively, might God want to rebuild through us at Jacob's Well?
5. Have a group member read Philippians 2:1-18 out loud to the group. As hard as it is to wrap our minds around, Jesus lived as a steward. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The Son of God, Creator of the Universe, did not have the mindset of an owner. If anyone who ever existed had the right to live as an owner, it was Jesus. As you read the Apostle Paul's words to the Philippians, talk about Jesus' example.
6. Talk about how Nehemiah's perspective reflects Jesus.

End your time together in prayer.



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.

OWNER	STEWARD
CONSUMER	SERVANT
CONTROL	FREEDOM
PRESSURE/ANXIETY/FEAR	TRUST/PEACE/JOY
SELFISHNESS	SERVICE
MEANINGLESSNESS	MEANING
PLAY IT SAFE (PROTECTS SELF)	TAKE STEPS OF FAITH/RISK
ISOLATION	COMMUNITY: US AND GOD
US/ME VS. THEM MENTALITY	EXPERIENCE GOD
GOD IS DISTANT	LEGACY
STUFF/TOYS	

Statements to ponder....

1. "I want to follow God but I want to be in charge."
2. "I want God to change me but I want it to be safe."
3. "I want to experience God but I don't want it to cost me too much."
4. "I want to see lives change but I want it to be easy, not too messy."
5. "I want a life of meaning but I want it to be convenient."



MONDAY JANUARY 30, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 2:1-2

When God moves the King to ask about Nehemiah's sadness, Nehemiah is ready with specific instructions and definite plans for what he will need. The plans are the result of the time he spent with God. God prepared him for what He wanted him to do. Nehemiah knew exactly what to ask for when the time was right.

The question we must ask ourselves as we learn Nehemiah is, "What made him different? What propelled him toward God and a life of meaning in Him? Why did he pray for four months and allow God to prepare him for the purposes God had?" As we seek to understand Nehemiah, we need to determine his perspective. Nehemiah's outlook was different. Nehemiah lived his life as a steward, not as an owner. A steward recognizes that God is the owner. Everything we have is God's. Read Acts 17:24-28 and 1 Chronicles 29:10-13.

What do you think it means to live as a steward? What do you think it means to live as an owner?

How does this perspective affect how you live in relationship as well as in the way you use your time, talents, and finances? What about your influence and your position in life or in your work? We can ponder to ourselves, "If it belongs to me I will...." or "If it belongs to God I will...."

For this week's devotions, each day we are going to compare and contrast life as a steward versus life as an owner. As we do, we are going to appreciate how a stewardship mindset drove Nehemiah's decisions. To begin, a steward has a servant's outlook. Rather than living life as a consumer, a steward lives to serve. Nehemiah could have chosen a life of luxury as the cupbearer of the King. Instead of choosing a life of affluence, however, Nehemiah chose a life of influence. Nehemiah chose service over selfishness.

Nehemiah knew that he was not in charge. He humbly surrendered his life to God, and God worked through him in amazing ways. Maybe one of your hesitations in living a life like Nehemiah has you saying, "I want to follow God, but I want to be in charge." To choose a life of stewardship is to choose a life where God is in charge. His plans are what we seek rather than our own. Where is your heart today? As you spend time alone with God, talk to Him about your own life. Share with Him your desire for your life to have meaning and purpose. Confess the places where you struggle to want to be in charge rather than living a life of service in Him.

TUESDAY JANUARY 31, 2017:

Yesterday we started to compare and contrast life as a steward versus life as an owner.

Read Nehemiah 2:2-10

Perhaps you find yourself saying, "I want God to change me, but I want it to be safe." In these verses, Nehemiah travels 800 miles to Jerusalem. Imagine the difficulty of this journey in Nehemiah's time. This was not a safe endeavor. Not only was the journey treacherous, but Nehemiah also encountered the displeasure of Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah, an Ammonite official.

Nehemiah's perspective as a steward pushes him to take steps of faith. He takes risks rather than protecting himself by playing it safe. How does this compare to your own life?

Do you find yourself playing it safe? Why?

God wants us to have security in Him. Read Luke 12:15-31.

Do you realize that playing it safe to protect yourself sooner or later causes anxiety and fear? Your security comes only from your surroundings and your possessions, rather than from your trust in God. Trusting in God for our security brings peace and joy even when He asks us to take steps of faith in Him.

What steps of faith have you taken recently?

As you end your quiet time today, picture yourself sitting in the sand by the ocean. Imagine building a sand castle as you sit, enjoying the sun and the breeze. You work hard to build the castle with your own hands. Now, in comparison, look out to the ocean and ponder on all of God's creation. No matter how hard you work to keep your sand castle safe, eventually you will wear yourself out as the tide sets in. The pressure to keep it all together, as well as the anxiety and fear that fills us when things aren't going as we think they should, washes away as we surrender everything to God. Release the illusion that you are an owner. Free yourself to be a steward. As we trust God with our lives, peace and joy flood our souls, just like the tide flowing over our castle in the sand. As stewards, we become free from the anxiety of having to keep it all together. As you picture this scene, pray and ask God to help you let go and allow Him to give you the perspective of a steward rather than an owner.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2017:

If we live our lives as owners, God will become distant. It is only with the perspective of a steward, as Nehemiah had, that we more fully experience what God has for us. Maybe you find yourself saying, "I want to experience God, but I don't want it to cost me too much." Living with a stewardship perspective allowed Nehemiah to give all he had. He gave everything to ensure for God's people the safety and security they needed through the experience of rebuilding the wall together. What walls, literally or figuratively, might God want to rebuild through us at Jacob's Well?

Read Matthew 25:14-30. Who in the parable has Nehemiah's perspective? Why?

Just as the master in the parable gives each servant bags of gold, God entrusts us with everything we have. If we try to live as owners our lives become meaningless when it comes to God's purposes, but if we live as stewards we follow Him in faith. We allow Him to work in our relationships with others, as well as lead us in how we use our time, talents, and finances, along with our influence and position. As God's servants, we put ourselves to work for good. We love people and we persist in God's plans no matter how much it costs, knowing that this pursuit will be where we experience Him at work in us and through us.

This is why we titled our fall series, "Pursue". We learned that following Christ means to follow His ways, to pursue Him, and be directed by His life and by His example. Our memory verse for the "Pursue" series was Mark 8:34-38. Read these verses. If we find ourselves saying, "I want to experience God, but I don't want it to cost me too much," these verses help put everything into the perspective Nehemiah had. Spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you His perspective. Ask God to show you how following Him leads to a life of stewardship.

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 2, 2017:

"I want a life of meaning, but I want it to be convenient." What Nehemiah experienced was not convenient. The journey was long and the task was difficult. Nehemiah trusted God, and through the difficulties he faced, he experienced God in a way he never could have in convenience.

Read Philippians 2:1-18

As hard as it is to wrap our minds around, Jesus lived as a steward. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The Son of God, Creator of the Universe, did not have the mindset of an owner. If anyone who ever existed had the right to live as an owner, it was Jesus.

As you read the Apostle Paul's words to the Philippians, Jesus' example is clear. Write down what strikes you about Jesus' perspective.

How does Nehemiah's perspective reflect Jesus?

Can you remember a season of your life during which you lived as a steward like Nehemiah? If so, what would it take for you to make this a consistent step in your life?

In convenience, we miss the adventure of God. We miss the joy of seeing lives changed. Have you ever considered what you might be missing due to the desire for ease and convenience?

Rather than convenience, we want to be people of character. As you sit quietly before God, ask Him to give you a specific area in your life where you can take a step toward Him in humility. With Jesus as our example, we embrace humility. With Nehemiah's example we take steps toward courage. Ask God to remove the desire for convenience, replacing it with courage and His compassion for people. Give control of your life to God. Enjoy the freedom of living for a legacy rather than for material possessions. Ask God to create in you the heart of a steward.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2017:

Read ahead to Nehemiah 5:1-13

Perhaps you find yourself saying, "I want to see lives changed, but I want it to be easy and not too messy." Nehemiah knew that the task would not be easy. He also knew that working with people would be messy. This did not intimidate him. He stepped into the difficulty and the mess and was able to do so because he recognized God was leading.

If we live like owners, we will isolate ourselves. Our thoughts will move toward an "us vs. me" mentality. Living as stewards produces the opposite result. We work to create community, knowing that as God's children it is us and God together for His plans. This is what makes the Church so beautiful.

As you think about God working in you and through you, changing your life and the lives of those around you, what intimidates you about working with others?

What struggles do you anticipate in community?

As you think about these, ponder on what role you play in the struggle. What could you do differently so that community, though difficult at times, becomes a goal you seek?

In the verses we read today, Nehemiah's perspective pushed him through the problems in order to grab hold of God's will and plans, not only for himself but for the people. Nehemiah did not focus on his own agenda, but he lived out God's agenda. He stepped into the opportunity of the life God wanted for him. Nehemiah could have complained and focused on why the people had not yet rebuilt the wall, or on how the leadership had failed, etc. Instead, he followed God in a completely unrealistic endeavor that could only be brought to completion by the power of God.

Take time to think about this today. Talk to God about how you are feeling as we ponder Nehemiah's perspective this week. What challenges you? What excites you? Ask God to help you believe in community. No one is insignificant in the kingdom of God. We all have a role to play. Ask God to help you believe this for yourself and for others. Ask God to help you capture His vision rather than your own.

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.



WEEK 3

FEBRUARY 4 & 5, 2017

"FIRST FRUITS"

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 13:2 "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."

Exodus 13:12 "you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's."

Exodus 23:19 "The best of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God."

Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."

Nehemiah 10:35 "We obligate ourselves to bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD."

Nehemiah 12:44 "On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered."

Nehemiah 13:31 "and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good."

Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Colossians 3:17 "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Malachi 3:10-12 "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. ¹¹I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. ¹²Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts."

1 Timothy 6:6-7 "But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world."

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>





GROUPS MATERIAL

OPEN WITH PRAYER

1. We are to consecrate and set apart our first and best for God. This is the principle of First Fruits. As an act of love, worship, and obedience we bring to God our first and best in our relationships, time, talents, finances, influence, position, worship, devotional life and our work and/or school life. Do you see how this is an act of love, worship and obedience? Why or why not?
2. Spend time sharing as a group on what you discovered in the activity at the bottom of day one of the devotions this week. If your group has not done day one, look at the activity together and discuss your answers as a group.
3. Read Nehemiah 8:1-9. Think about a time in your life in which you found yourself disconnected from God. Instead of bringing your first and best, how did you slowly push Him away?
4. Return to the moment you realized, as the Israelites did, that your connection to God was distant and needed to be restored? How were you reminded that He gave His first and best for you in Jesus? Were you overcome in reverence, like the Israelites in Jerusalem when Ezra read the Book of the Law of Moses? Share what happened in your life.
5. In studying Nehemiah, we see him honor God in every way. Read Nehemiah 10:35, 12:44, and 13:31. In these verses Nehemiah initiates the principle of first fruits, reestablishing the belief for the Israelites to follow. This week we are learning how, as an act of love, worship, and obedience, we bring God our first and best. This is the principle of First Fruits. One very tangible way to begin to bring God our first and best comes in bringing our tithe. How is this true?
6. One of the greatest areas of growth in our lives can come through giving. It can be a catalyst to put our treasure, our heart, back in the place of bringing God our first and best. Share with the group a time when you gave sacrificially. How did that experience bring you joy and fulfillment?
7. What do you think the result would be in you, your family, our church and community, if we became a people easily identifiable as disciples of Jesus because we live thankful and generous lives? Read 2 Corinthians 9:7 as a group.

Next weekend's message is incredibly important. We will be looking at the challenges facing the Chippewa Valley. Please make every attempt to participate in the message either during the weekend services or online. Pray that our church leaders lead well. Pray that the challenges we face together as a congregation become opportunities for each of us to **LIVE IT WELL.**



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.

When we parcel out our earnings to our savings, bills, groceries, hobbies etc., God asks that we designate our first percentage to Him. We look to be people who bring God our best, not what is left over. We bring our first percentage to Him in faith. Our step of obedience increases our trust in that we give Him the first fruits believing He will provide for our needs. As we bring our tithes, our actions show we love and trust Him. His love unfolds to us as He takes care of us.



MONDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2017:

We are to consecrate and set apart our first and best for God. As an act of love, worship, and obedience, we bring God our first and best in our relationships, time, talents, finances, influence, position, worship, devotional life and in our work and/or school life. Because God asks us to set aside our first and best for Him in every area of our life, we are going to spend this week studying the principle of First Fruits.

To begin, read Exodus 13 verses 2 & 12.

What gives God the authority to ask the Israelites to consecrate and set apart their firstborn? Last week in our devotions, we looked at what it means to live as stewards because God is the owner. God created everything: the earth and all that is in it. Nehemiah knew this. Read Nehemiah 9:6. Also read Psalm 89:11. To **LIVE IT WELL**, we need to grow to live as stewards with God in His proper place as owner of our life. God as owner starts with awareness. This becomes genuine in our life when we bring Him our first and best in every area, setting it aside and consecrating it for Him.

For instance, we may set aside time for God when we wake up in the morning. Even though we may be busy, we commit our first and best time of the day to Him and we trust that He will work through the rest of our day to give us the time we need for all that is before us. Do you see how this is an act of love, worship and obedience? Why or why not?

Think about your life. Circle how well you feel you currently bring God your first and best in each of these areas.

1 I do not bring God my first and best at all.

10 I bring God my first and best in every way.

Relationships

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Talents

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Work/School Life

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Finances

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Influence

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Devotional Life

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Position

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Worship

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*As you think and reflect on your results, what is God showing you?
How might He be asking you to take a step?*

As you spend time alone with God today, pray Nehemiah 9:6 as your own words. Talk to Him about what you discovered and about what steps He might be leading you to take. Pray for the wisdom to wholeheartedly follow Him, putting Him in his rightful place as owner.

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 7, 2017:

Read ahead to Nehemiah 8:1-9

In these verses, Ezra the priest reads the Book of the Law of Moses before all of the people from early morning until midday. While Ezra speaks, the people stand in worship. Overcome in reverence, they weep as they stand.

Imagine what the Israelite people had been through. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon forced them into captivity, assaulting Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C. Not only did he lay waste to the city, he battered and broke down the wall around the city. Cyrus, King of Persia, then defeated King Nebuchadnezzar and the people of Babylon. During Cyrus' reign, God prompted the king to begin returning exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The Israelites faced tremendous opposition to the rebuilding, which eventually caused the temple work to cease. It was renewed under King Darius and finally completed during Darius' reign. Many years later, under the rule of King Artaxerxes, Ezra returned to Jerusalem alongside more exiles. The Jews had attempted to rebuild the wall earlier in the reign of Artaxerxes, but due to protests he ordered them to stop. Twenty years into the rule of King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah returned to help the Israelites finally rebuild the wall and the gates around the city.

As the years had gone by, the leaders and the people had become reconciled to their sad state of affairs. Their connection to God was severely damaged because of their captivity and their city being destroyed. Hearing the Book of the Law of Moses stirred their souls and called them back to the heart of the Father. Once again they were motivated, with joy and gratefulness, to give God their first and best.

Think about a time in your life during which you found yourself disconnected from God. Instead of bringing your first and best, how did you slowly push Him away? Return to the moment you realized, as the Israelites did, that your connection to God was distant and needed to be restored? How were you reminded that He gave His first and best for you in Jesus? Were you overcome in reverence, like the Israelites were in Jerusalem when Ezra read the Book of the Law of Moses?

Reflect on Colossians 1:15-20 and 2nd Corinthians 5:21.

God gave His first and best for us in Jesus. Jesus gave His very life on the cross for our redemption. Col 1:18b speaks of Christ having "preeminence"—to be of first priority. What would change if Christ had preeminence in your life?

How does the devotion today challenge you in your pursuit of Jesus to consecrate and set apart your first and best for God in every area of your life?

Think about the areas from yesterday where you discerned whether you were bringing your first and best to God. How could you begin to take steps to bring your first and best to God in those areas? Spend time in prayer over what He is revealing to you.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2017:

Nehemiah 10:35 "We obligate ourselves to bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all fruit of every tree, year by year, to the house of the LORD."

Nehemiah 12:44 "On that day men were appointed over the storerooms, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the Law for the priests and for the Levites according to the fields of the towns, for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered."

Nehemiah 13:31 "and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good."

In studying Nehemiah, we see him honor God in every way. In these verses he initiates the principle of First Fruits, reestablishing this belief and practice for the Israelites to follow. Read Exodus 23:19a, 2 Chronicles 31:5, and Proverbs 3:9.

In our day, Jesus teaches in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." We also understand from Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

This week we are learning how, as an act of love, worship, and obedience, we bring God our first and best. One very tangible way to begin to bring God our first and best comes in bringing our tithe. When we parcel out our earnings to our savings, bills, groceries, hobbies etc., God asks that we designate our first percentage to Him. We look to be people who bring God our best, not what is left over. We bring our first percentage to Him in faith. Our step of obedience increases our trust, in that we give Him our first fruits, believing He will provide for our needs. As we bring our tithes, our actions show that we love and trust Him. His love unfolds to us as He takes care of us.

Read Malachi 3:10-12. This is the only passage in the Bible in which God puts forth the challenge for us to test Him. He wants to show Himself to us as He takes the first we set apart for Him and then provides for our needs.

How does this teaching fall on you? Write your thoughts here:

**CONTINUED
NEXT PAGE**

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2017: (CONT)

As part of **LIVE IT WELL** you and your family will be challenged to make a commitment to increase your offering to a full tithe or 10% of your income. How do you feel about this challenge? What would keep you from making this kind of commitment?

Reflect over your answers in prayer and time alone with God, remembering that God is the owner and we are the stewards. Ask God how he would have you respond to the challenge to tithe as an act of worship, obedience and faith.

A Question for Families:

- As a family, discuss the difference between being a steward and being an owner.
- As a family, discuss giving and tithing.
- What sacrifices could we make as a family to participate in **LIVE IT WELL**?

A Question for Students:

What is a better question, "What do I want to do with my life?" or "God, what have you created me to do for you and your Kingdom?"

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2017:

Matthew 6:21 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Do you realize that the clearest indication of the location of our treasure is revealed as we analyze what we give in our relationships, time, talents, finances, influence, position, worship, devotional life, as well as our work or school life? If you inventoried your life, what would it say about where your treasure is?

One of the greatest areas of growth in our lives can come through giving. It can be a catalyst to put our treasure, our hearts, back in the place of bringing God our first and best. Contemplate a time when you gave sacrificially. How did that experience bring you joy and fulfillment?

As you think about your pattern of giving, is giving changing you to be more and more like Jesus, or have you simply become comfortable?

The principle of First Fruits energizes and motivates us to put our treasure first in God. In all ways this keeps us living a life of stewardship. It protects our hearts from foolishly protecting ourselves and our wealth. We become generous, believing the truth that God is the owner of all.

How do we as people of God demonstrate a Spirit of generosity?

What do you think the result would be in you, your family, our church and community if we became a people easily identifiable as disciples of Jesus because we live thankful and generous lives? 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

As you pray today, talk with God about where your treasure is. Ask Him to give you His wisdom on how to give Him His rightful place as owner, as well as how to become a generous and giving person in every other area of your life as He leads you.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 10, 2017:

Read 1 Timothy 6:3-19

From a spiritual perspective, what are the dangers and opportunities of money?

As we look at this Scripture, we understand the love of money is the danger not the money itself. It is important to understand that if money rules our lives, that is where we will find our identity, security, significance, happiness and joy. Wealth is deceitful. It can't deliver these pieces of our life—only God can.

Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money."

Money wants to rule our lives. Money calls to us and foolishly says we don't need God if we have riches. If we are committed to our money rather than to God, we will begin to despise God, especially in our hard times. Loving and serving money rather than God will bring us despair. It chokes out our faith.

If God is first in our finances, our hearts will be turned to Him consistently in this area. We will be good stewards. As we give, God will work through our gifts to reach people. God doesn't need us to accomplish His work, but He invites us to participate. As we give, God turns our offerings into true riches. People give their lives to Him for eternity. This is eternal work!

As we discern whether or not God is first in our finances, we can ask ourselves these questions:

Does my giving control my spending or does my spending control my giving?

Is my money a tool for myself or a tool for God?

In looking at my finances, what idols does my money uncover?

God gives us teaching on tithing in the Scriptures in order to protect us from the dangers of making wealth our priority. How does embracing the perspective of a steward and practicing the principle of First Fruits and tithing give us protection?

What lessons do we learn from practicing First Fruits and bringing our tithe? Consider one of our memory verse for this series; 1 Timothy 6:6-7: "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world."

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.



WEEK 4

FEBRUARY 11 & 12, 2017

**"PROBLEMS
AND A PLAN"
NEHEMIAH 2:9-20**

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. ¹⁰But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

¹¹So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. ¹²Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. ¹³I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. ¹⁴Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. ¹⁵Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

¹⁷Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." ¹⁸And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. ¹⁹But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem."

NEHEMIAH 2:9-20

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>



 **GROUPS MATERIAL***OPEN WITH PRAYER***Read Nehemiah 2:9-20 taking turns through the verses as a group.**

1. As we grow in discipleship, God opens our eyes to the hurting. Share with each other the problems you recognize people are facing in our community.
2. Like Nehemiah, what courage would it take for you to personally step into a problem in the Chippewa Valley? Share your thoughts as a group.
3. As you listened to the message this past weekend, what is your response to the church's plan to meet the needs God calls us to as well as to serve the people God calls us to serve? How does it specifically impact you? How will you be a part of the plan? Share as a group.
4. As you think about the story of Jacob's Well, what is your story in relation to the story God is creating here? How has God worked through Jacob's Well for you and/or your family?

Read Acts 2:42-47, taking turns through the verses as a group.

5. Think back to the early church in Acts. Share what thoughts you have as you read these verses.
6. As you think about being a part of God's church here and now in Jacob's Well, what dreams come to mind for us as a body of believers wholeheartedly following Jesus?
7. Pray through Acts 2:42-47 as a group. Pray that the example they set as the first church continues on in our world today. Pray for what God has for the future of His church as a whole and also here at Jacob's Well.



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.

If there are people who did not have a chance to see the message from the weekend, watch the message together as a group as your study time begins.



MONDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 2:9-20

It takes courage to look at problems. We learn this very well through Nehemiah. It took incredible courage for him to leave his home and journey to Jerusalem to help the people there rebuild their lives. At Jacob's Well, we want to be a church of courage. We want to look with courage at the problems facing the Chippewa Valley, our nation and our world. We want to be people who journey with and come alongside people to help rebuild their broken lives through a relationship with Jesus.

As we grow in discipleship, God opens our eyes to the hurting. What are three problems you recognize that people are facing in our community?

Like Nehemiah, what courage would it take for you to personally step into one of these problems?

As you listened to the message this past weekend, what is your response to the church's plan to meet the needs God calls us to as well as serve the people God calls us to serve?

How does it specifically impact you? How will you be a part of the plan to care for the people of our community?

Pray that our congregation would be people of courage. Pray that we would look to God for His direction and will as individuals and as a church.

Take out the commitment card you received this week and ask God to speak to you and your family about how to participate in **LIVE IT WELL**.

If you are struggling to comprehend the church's next steps as a whole, ask God for clarity. Ask that the leaders of Jacob's Well would be completely covered in His wisdom, dependent upon Him for every step of the journey. Pray for the people who are currently here, the people God will bring soon, and the people whose lives will intersect with Jacob's Well in the future. Pray that we are forever a church dependent on God, living for lives to be changed by His love, mercy, and grace.

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2017:

Read John 4, about the Samaritan Woman meeting Jesus at Jacob's Well.

Sixteen years ago, God began writing the story of our church, Jacob's Well. Just like the Samaritan woman met Jesus at Jacob's Well and her whole life was changed, over and over Jacob's Well has been a place of life change. Hundreds of lives have been transformed as people have taken steps to know and become like Jesus through the story He is creating here.

This One Story endures, and we pray that more and more lives will intersect with Jesus through His church here at Jacob's Well. In order to maximize and fund the ongoing ministry of Jacob's Well, we are challenging everyone to become involved. We want to continue the current ministries of the church and continue to equip our people for the ministry God has for us here and around the world.

As you think about the story of Jacob's Well, what is your story in relation to the story God is creating here? How has God worked through Jacob's Well for you and/or your family?

From the beginning, the vision of Jacob's Well has been: "Wherever we are on our journey we will take steps together to know and become like Jesus." These steps happen through the story God is building here. Think about all that God does through care, groups, family ministry, worship, serve, the weekend messages, and so on and so on. People have found forgiveness, marriages have been strengthened and renewed. Children have been raised and hurting people have been cared for.

Jessi says...

"I grew up in a Christian home and accepted Jesus at a young age. Over the past several years, God has been deepening my understanding of the Gospel and the amazing grace that has nothing to do with what I can do to earn it, which is freeing me to serve Him out of love and obedience instead of obligation. I want to be baptized because I want to be obedient to Jesus' command and to identify with His death, burial and resurrection, publicly professing my faith in Him as my Lord and Savior."

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Jordan says...

"When I was younger I knew of God and His Son Jesus, but I didn't know what having a personal relationship with the Lord meant. About 2 years ago, the Lord broke through all my walls and lifted free heavy chains and I accepted Jesus into my life. It's been an incredible blessing to experience God's love, grace, forgiveness, redemption and peace. In His eyes I am 100% accepted, cared for and loved. God is who He says He is and although I still struggle, God is always bigger and always remains victorious. I believe Jesus took all sin and shame on the cross for me, paid my debt, and resurrected so that I could live a new shameless life with Him living inside me, all in freedom. Before I knew Jesus my life was empty and now I have found everything I'll ever need or ever want in Jesus. My heart belongs to Him and I will follow Him. What an amazing Savior!"

Hannah says...

"I grew up knowing of God, but not truly knowing Him. I was going through the motions. It wasn't until a couple of years ago that I found out how much God loved me and how much He wanted a relationship with me. In the last few months my relationship has grown with Him and I have given my life to Him. I am ready to take the next step in my faith. My life is His and I want to follow Him in all that I do. I am ready to give all I am to Jesus my Savior!"

We want God to continue to write the story of life change at Jacob's Well, knowing that by His Spirit Jesus will continue to transform one heart at a time just like He did when He met the Samaritan woman so long ago. This is the reason we open the doors and turn on the lights. We want lives to be changed through the transformative work of Christ, and we want this to happen over and over again. Take time to pray through John 4. Pray that just as Jesus met the woman at the well and her whole life was changed, this will be what happens at our church over and over. Pray that this ongoing story of life change is written again and again. Pray that every life God wants to touch through this place happens as we depend on Him.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 7:1-5. Also take some time to glance through the list of names and the rest of chapter 7.

Nehemiah's kindness extended beyond simply building a wall. Everything he did was for the people. Once the wall was built, he didn't quickly pack up his things and begin his journey back to the King. Instead, he looked around and realized the city was large and spacious but there were few people in it. God put it on his heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families because the houses had not yet been rebuilt. Nehemiah knew how important it was to give the people not only a place to return to but a place to belong.

At Jacob's Well, we look around and we also see opportunity for belonging. We look around and realize that our building is full. We see Wednesday nights overflowing with youth and the weekend services overflowing with individuals and families. We understand that if we do not ready a place, many who are not yet here may not have a place in which to encounter the love of Jesus.

In **LIVE IT WELL**, our "One Love" is a campus expansion to make room for people who have not yet arrived home at our church. The campus expansion will provide a 700-seat worship venue, opening up space for those God plans to bring here in the future. We want to be a church that not only cares well for all the people God has in our church today, but we want to prepare well for all those who haven't arrived yet. We don't want visitors to come on the weekend only to quickly turn around and leave because there is no room for them, causing them to miss an opportunity to meet Jesus.

Look through the handout from this weekend, which describes **LIVE IT WELL**. Also, take a moment to go to the church website and watch the **LIVE IT WELL** video from this past weekend. What would it mean to the Chippewa Valley if we as a church joined God as He accomplished this continuation of His plan for our church?

Remember the time years ago, when 400 people who met in different area schools sacrificed for the land and first building project where our church is now located. Their generosity created space for those who came over the next years, including many of you! Remember also that people sacrificed again to allow for the building of the North Venue, creating even more space for all of us who are here today. Think of all the people in our area who need Jesus, not only for their eternity to be set in Him, but for their lives to be changed here and now, just as ours have been. This is a story Jacob's Well is part of.

We are all part of "One Story." The story goes all the way back to the beginning. The one love of God in Christ Jesus set this world in motion. People we don't know, except through the Scriptures, played a crucial role in our knowing Jesus as Lord and

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WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2017: (CONT)

Savior today. Nehemiah is just one example of how the story God is writing could have ended if the people of Jerusalem continued on in disarray. Instead, Nehemiah came, sacrificed and worked in order for the people of Jerusalem to have their future intact for the purposes of God.

Whether we realize it or not, as followers of Christ we all have a place in the story. The story continues through us here and now at Jacob's Well. People who don't know God, who are lost and broken in our community, will have an opportunity to come and meet Him because of the work we do now. One Love will make room for the love of Christ to be shared with more and more people as we build the new worship venue, add a Ministry Center to our existing offices, and work to add some additional facility improvements necessary to accommodate growth.

Every name listed in the 7th chapter of Nehemiah was part of the legacy created under Nehemiah's leadership. Pray about this today. Ask God to give you a glimpse of the legacy He wants to create through your life. What legacy will your leadership leave? What legacy will Jacob's Well leave? Nehemiah worked to create a place to which the people could return, giving them a place to belong. Pray that we would be people like Nehemiah, who give the people of our community a place to belong in Christ. Take out the commitment card you received this week and continue to ask God to speak to you and your family about how to participate in **LIVE IT WELL.**

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 16, 2017:

Read Acts 2:42-47

Think back to the early church in Acts. As you do, imagine the words of Acts coming alive in your mind. What strikes you as you picture what you are reading?

We want to be a people like those in the early church in Acts. We want to be people devoted to God's Word, to prayer and to fellowship. We want to come together and extend Christ's love to the Chippewa Valley and Western Wisconsin. With "One Hope" we believe God has so much more for our area and we want to be a part of His work.

Take time to dream today. Dream about what God might want us to do as a people devoted to Him. With the 96 acres just north of our campus, we could extend the work God has done even further into the community around us. Dream about the ministry opportunities that could come to be a reality. Journal your thoughts here:

As you pray today, allow the words in Acts 2:42-47 to become your own. Pray that in the future, Jacob's Well continues to be a place where lives are changed. Ask God to give you His dreams for our church community. Pray about how God wants you to be involved. Pray for His wisdom and direction for all He is at work doing in us and through us as individuals and as a church.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 5:14-19

LIVE IT WELL is a call to stewardship born from being a follower of Jesus. This is our opportunity to join God as He leads us to invest, in unprecedented ways, to see more and more people take steps to know and become like Christ in the Chippewa Valley, Western Wisconsin and around the world.

Think about Nehemiah and his commitment to the Lord. As you do, sit quietly with God.

Take a few deep breaths and settle into silence.

1. Choose a very simple prayer to express your openness and desire for God to work in you. Pray about Nehemiah's example, and what God might be calling you to do to further His Kingdom through the work of His church, Jacob's Well. (*Example: Abba, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit, I belong to You, just as Nehemiah did. Help me to know Your will for me as an individual and as a part of your church, Jacob's Well.*)
2. Close your eyes and offer this prayer to Jesus, allowing His will and love to have full access in your being.
3. If and when you become distracted, offer again your simple prayer back to God.
4. This is an exciting time in our church! Through **LIVE IT WELL**, some people in our church will begin to give for the first time. Some will expand what they have been giving to a full tithe, and some will begin to give even above their tithe. As you consider where you are on your journey, ask God to help you discern the commitment He is asking you to make. Will you begin to give for the first time? Will you expand your giving to a tithe? Will you begin to give above your tithe? Ask for the courage and strength to follow God in whatever next step He is calling you to. Thank Him for His deep love! Thank Him for the opportunity we have, as a community of believers, to make a difference in our world. Pray the words of Psalm 63:1-3 out loud as your own prayer several times, trusting that God will lead you into whatever commitment He wants from you as an individual and as a family as part of the church family of Jacob's Well. Pray for everyone in our church as we each seek God for His will.

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.



WEEK 5

FEBRUARY 18 & 19, 2017

“RESTORATION”
NEHEMIAH 5:1-13

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. ²For there were those who said, "With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive." ³There were also those who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine." ⁴And there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. ⁵Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards."

⁶I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. ⁷I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." And I held a great assembly against them ⁸and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" They were silent and could not find

a word to say. ⁹So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? ¹⁰Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. ¹¹Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them." ¹²Then they said, "We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say." And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. ¹³I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said "Amen" and praised the LORD. And the people did as they had promised.

NEHEMIAH 5:1-13

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>





GROUPS MATERIAL

OPEN WITH PRAYER

1. Spend time sharing as a group about what you discovered in the questions on Day 1 of the devotions this week. If your group has not done Day 1, look at the questions together here and pick one or two to discuss as a group.

In your life:

- o What would you like to see rebuilt?
 - o What would you like to see recovered?
 - o What would you like to see reestablished?
 - o What would you like to see renewed?
 - o What would you like to see repaired?
 - o What would you like to see restored?
 - o What would you like to see resurrected?
 - o What would you like to see returned?
 - o What would you like to see revived?
2. The important thing to remember as we dream for restoration in our own lives, is that in the end we are all part of the greater story God is writing. The Bible was written to tell the Biblical story of redemption for our world and we are included in that story individually and as a church. It is incredible to ponder on God's greater plan! How should God's story of the restoration of our world shape our lives as individuals and as a church in our present and future?
 3. Please read paragraph 3 on Day 2 of the devotions. How has God used the ministries of Jacob's Well in a way that has helped you and your family?

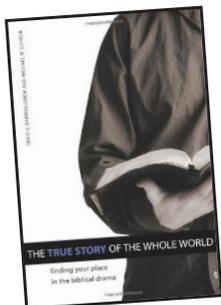
GROUPS MATERIAL (CONT)

4. Think about the people forced into slavery in our world today. Refer to the chart on day 4 of your devotions. As you look at the numbers, as a group share what it does to you to think about each of these numbers as people—moms, dads, sisters, brothers, teenagers, and even little children. Each of these people has family and a life God desires to restore. God’s restoration here on earth comes through us—His followers—as we love and care for people, no matter who they are or what their story is. What step might God be asking you to take as a group or as individuals to live this out?
5. Read the prayer of the Israelites in Nehemiah 9: 5-37. The Israelites approach God together, remembering all God has done. They commit to **LIVE IT WELL** as a community. Like the Israelites in their prayer so long ago, pray that we would remember all that God has done for us individually and as a church. Pray that we would understand as individuals and as a church where we fit in the story God is writing as He restores not only our lives, but our whole world. Look at the Share Partner list from Day 5 from the Devotions. Pray for our church ministries and for our Share Partners. Pray that we would all **LIVE IT WELL** for the glory of God.



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.



A BOOK FOR FURTHER READING

The True Story of the Whole World
 (Bartholomew, Goheen and Bartholomew)
 Michael W Goheen, and Craig G Bartholomew.
 1st ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.:
 Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2009.



MONDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2017:

Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psalm 30:3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

Psalm 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

How amazing and beautiful it is to understand our God is a God who restores. Like the Psalmists, what would you like to see God restore? Take some time to reflect on the following questions. Like Nehemiah, remember that our God is a God of restoration and hope. Talk with God about what you discover.

In your life:

- o What would you like to see rebuilt?
- o What would you like to see recovered?
- o What would you like to see reestablished?
- o What would you like to see renewed?
- o What would you like to see repaired?
- o What would you like to see restored?
- o What would you like to see resurrected?
- o What would you like to see returned?
- o What would you like to see revived?

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MONDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2017: (CONT)

The important thing to remember as we dream of the restoration we long for in our own lives, is that in the end we are all part of the greater story God is writing. The Bible has been written to tell the Biblical story of redemption for our world and we are included in that story individually and as a church. It is incredible to think about God's greater plan!

Where do we belong in the story? How does God's story of the restoration of our world shape our lives in the present? If Nehemiah would not have pursued God, the people of Jerusalem would not have been restored. Read the prayer of the Israelites in Nehemiah 9: 5-37. Like the Israelites in their prayer so long ago, in your prayers this week pray that we would remember all that God has done for us individually and as a church. Pray that we would understand as individuals and as a church where we fit in the story God is writing to restore not only our lives, but our whole world. We want to live the change we long to see in the world. This is what it means to **LIVE IT WELL.**

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2017:

Read Nehemiah Chapter 3. Under Nehemiah's leadership, the people worked together side by side to repair the wall. As they completed their individual sections shoulder to shoulder, eventually the city of Jerusalem was restored as a whole. It began with the rebuilding of the wall, but was the catalyst of the restoration and rebuilding of their entire community.

How does what transpired through Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem inspire you today? Why is it fitting that we study Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem as we prepare to build a building here at Jacob's Well? Ultimately, we understand that the building isn't the point. The point is the restoration of our community, region, and world. We are building a building so that more and more people can experience the transformative work of Christ. We want to understand as individuals and as a church where we fit in the story God is writing for His plan of restoration for our world. We want to be faithful as Nehemiah was faithful. This is what it means to **LIVE IT WELL**. We know that as God brings each person to His church Jacob's Well, each individual and family has the opportunity for healing through a relationship with Jesus. Wherever we are on our journey, if we take steps together—shoulder to shoulder and side by side—to know and become like Him, we will move toward health and healing. Over time, as we are changed by Christ as individuals, our community is also changed.

This is why we do what we do as a church. Through the Care ministry we provide support groups such as Celebrate Recovery, GriefShare, and DivorceCare. We orchestrate care classes and we provide marriage mentors. Our family ministry comes alongside families through the teaching for kids on the weekends and for youth on Wednesday nights. Groups happen for all students so that community is established early in their life, ensuring that no student is alone as they take steps to know and become like Jesus. Adults are able to experience worship on the weekends with steps and guidance through every weekend message that will equip and support each person to live out their walk with Jesus each and every day. Adults are invited into group life to connect in community. This also happens through our Serve commitment, which moves all of us from a place of existing only for ourselves to a place of unity and strength and action for God's bigger purposes and plans. Our church provides the @home Resource Center so that no matter where people are on their journey, they can find tools to help them take a next step. We have the prayer team ready and waiting to love, support, encourage and pray for anyone in need after every weekend service. Every ministry at Jacob's Well exists for the purposes of restoration and new life in Christ. We realize too that there is so much more work for us to do. As a church community we want more for our young adults,

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TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21, 2017: (CONT)

we want to know how to take better steps to help with the poor, and with those experiencing mental health difficulties. We know we have more steps to take. This is why we are pursuing the 96 acres of land next door to our property. What might God want us to do for our community on this land? Maybe He will have us build a community center? Maybe a place for families who are homeless? What dreams come to your mind? What do you see as possibilities for this land?

Pray that we would understand, as individuals and as a church, where we fit in the story God is writing for His plan to restore the Chippewa Valley. Pray for God's will for Jacob's Well now, tomorrow, next month, next year, and in the years to come. Pray about the work God wants to do in us and through us individually and as a church. Pray that we would step into God's plans for now and the future just like Nehemiah stepped into God's plans for the people of Jerusalem. Pray that we would **LIVE IT WELL.**

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2017:

One of the greatest evidences of how God is at work transforming individual lives comes through baptism. The testimonies shared through this step of publically professing our faith, helps us collectively see how we all are being changed by Christ. It reminds us how we continue to be a part of the greater story God is writing for the restoration of our world through His Son. Last August, 100 people shared the testimony through our *Splash!* service. This past November, 10 more people took the step of baptism in our weekend services. Here are some of the testimonies that were recently shared:

Kyla says...

"My faith came late in life. It wasn't until this summer with my incarceration in Sawyer County Jail that I realized I wasn't arrested, I was rescued. The ladies that organize the Bible study program and my cell mates showed me the way back to God's flock. Returned to the fold where I put my hope, love and trust back in Him. I want to declare publicly to God, myself, family and friends with this physical act of symbolism, my choice to follow Jesus. This is our opportunity to express love and faith as He has taught me. The sins of my old life have been washed away. My soul made new again. A vessel to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Life given over to my father. One who will never leave me, always guide me, protect and love me until He calls me to His side. Thanks be to the Son that made His sacrifice and rose to be my Savior."

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WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2017: (CONT)

Elayne says...

"I grew up going to church with my family and attending Sunday school every weekend. When I came to college 3 years ago I began to truly understand that God's acceptance and love for me were not dependent on me avoiding sin or being good enough. I put my trust in Jesus and the sacrifice that He made for me. I want to publically proclaim that putting my trust in Jesus has changed my life. I want to live a life dedicated to following Him. One way to follow Jesus is by keeping His commandments and believers are commanded to be baptized. This is an important step for me as I grow in relationship with Him."

Travis says...

"I was raised in a Christian home and ever since I can remember I have attended church. When I was 7 my parents discussed salvation with me and led me through the prayer of salvation. Since then, there have been mountain tops and deep valleys, but God has been faithful through it all and my relationship has grown! When I was young, there were times when I went through the motions. As I have grown up, I have experienced storms and my life has been changed. My faith has become my own and made me realize Baptism is my next step in following Jesus."

We want our church to be a place where God is at work, restoring life in Him. As you end your quiet time today, go back to John 4:1-26. Re-read this chapter, reminding yourself of the Scripture our church was founded on. As Jesus met the woman at the well, her life was changed. As she shared her story, the whole community was changed. Pray that God would replicate this story over and over again through us and our church.

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2017:

Read Nehemiah Chapter 5.

One of the steps God called Nehemiah toward in healing on behalf of Jerusalem was to help the poor. During this time, several things were happening. Those who did not own land were short on food. Those who did own land were compelled to mortgage their property in order to buy food and pay their taxes. Not only that, but those who had to borrow money to survive were also charged exorbitant interest rates and were forced to sell their children into slavery to pay for their loans.

Sadly, this type of injustice still happens in our world today.

Enslaved

Countries with the most people estimated to be in modern slavery

Rank and country	Population
1 India	14,285,700
2 China	3,241,400
3 Pakistan	2,058,200
4 Uzbekistan	1,201,400
5 Russia	1,049,700
6 Nigeria	834,200
7 Dem. Rep. of Congo	762,900
8 Indonesia	714,100
9 Bangladesh	680,900
10 Thailand	475,300

Source: Global Slavery Index
The Wall Street Journal

For example, did you know that more than 14 million people in India are estimated to live in modern slavery? According to a new index on global slavery, India ranks first out of 167 countries based on the number of people who are subject to abuse. The brutality includes intergenerational bonded labor, forced child labor, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, forced recruitment into non-state armed groups as well as forced marriage. The country's brick-making business is one of the worst offenders in the world.

Do you know a person or group of people who need someone to step in and advocate for them? If so, take time to pray about what God might be asking you to do.

If nothing comes to mind at this moment, ask God to show you if there is something He would like you to do to help a person or group of people in our community, region, nation or world. Tomorrow's devotion will give you information about Jacob's Well's partners with in Share.

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THURSDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2017: (CONT)

Nehemiah stepped into the lives of those who were struggling in poverty in Jerusalem. He asked the nobles and the officials to stop charging the people interest. He asked them to give the people back their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses. Not only that, but he asked them to return the interest they had charged. Nehemiah made the nobles and the officials take an oath to do what they had promised.

As you end your quiet time today, pray to have a heart like Nehemiah's. Not only did he lead the rebuilding of the wall and help the poor, Nehemiah also says in verses 15-18 that out of reverence for God he did not behave as the other leaders. Pray that as followers of Christ we would also be a people above reproach like Nehemiah, seeking God in how to make this world a better place. Continue to ask God how He wants you to give your first fruits in your relationships, time, talents, finances, influence, position, worship, devotional life and your work or school life for His purposes and plans in the world.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2017:

2 Corinthians 8:9 "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus became poor on our behalf. He came to serve, rather than to be served. As we learn to follow Jesus, we understand that He is our example. Each of the individuals, families, organizations, and churches we care and partner with as a church understand this truth well.

Take time to pray over the individuals and families within Jacob's Well who are taking steps toward wellbeing because of the generosity of God's people. Pray also for our Share Partners. You may pray for one section, one or more organizations, and/or one or more individuals or churches listed on the next page.

Benevolence (Sharing God's Resources) with Jacob's Well Individuals and Families

- Provision for physical and financial needs
- Care, provision, and support for emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing



As you pray for our share partners today, what other evidences of God at work in the people of our church do you see in our community?

What steps toward health and healing in our community might God be calling you to be a part of as you pray today? How does God want you to step in and meet a need?

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LIST OF JACOB’S WELL SHARE PARTNERS:

JW Individuals & Families

Caring for and supporting families in the Chippewa Valley & providing counseling for individuals and families in the Chippewa Valley

Local Organizations

APPLE Pregnancy Care Center
Good News Jail & Prison Ministry
Fierce Freedom
Hope Gospel

Local Individuals

Andy Draper – FCA
Matt Collatz – CRU
Adam Christian – UWEC/IV
Jenna Stromberger – UWEC/IV

CARELINK

Salvation Army EC/CF

Regional

MN/WI Baptist Convention
Youth With A Mission

Global Individuals

Hunts – Asia/CRU
International Missions Board
M&M Middle East
Builders For Christ
Hoffmans – Evangelical Free Church of America
Sam Crotty – Youth With A Mission
Orlando, FL

Church Plants

Table Community – Raleigh, NC
The Hogan Family

Short Term Interns

Sean Kaiser – UWEC/IV
Joanna Schroeder – UWMadison/CRU
David Suennen – UWEC/CRU
Amanda Jonet – UWEC/CRU
Griffin & Kendra Veldhuizen – UWEC/CRU

Short Term Outreaches & Initiatives

Just Us Run
Logan Pankratz – China/InterVarsity
Griffen Veldhulzen – UWEC/CRU
Grant Winsand – Navigators/ WI Dells
Paige Thelle – AIM/Multi Countries
Henry Williams Sojourn Church
Louisville, KY
Hillarrie Carlson
Evangelical Alliance Mission/France
Mark & Peggy Halverson
Team Work Africa – Liberia
Sandy Polzin – Haiti
Kristi & Kenneth Jibben
Lead Team Institute
Shift Church – Gainesville, FL –
The Engedal Family
NPH – Honduras - Parisi Family

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.



WEEK 6

FEBRUARY 25 & 26, 2017

**“OVERCOMING
OPPOSITION”**

NEHEMIAH 4:1-4, 9, 14-20

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. ²And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" ³Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!" ⁴Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives.

⁵And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes." ¹⁵When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. ¹⁶From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the

spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, ¹⁷who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. ¹⁸And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. ¹⁹And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. ²⁰In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

NEHEMIAH 4:1-4, 9, 14-20

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>



 GROUPS MATERIAL

1. As we serve God, it is important that we understand that we will have times of opposition. Read Jesus' words in John 16:33. How have you been opposed in your life as you have obeyed God? Share as a group.
2. What tends to be your first reaction when you face opposition?
3. Read Nehemiah 4:4-5. Nehemiah's first reaction was to pray. Talk about the importance of praying first when we face opposition.
4. We won't have to defend ourselves with swords, spears and bows like the Israelites did, but we do need to learn from their example. Read 1 Peter 5:8. The truth is, as followers of Christ, we have an adversary. As much as we don't want to think about it, we have an enemy who is determined to destroy us. He will do his best to lure us away from God and stop us from the work God has asked us to do. Discuss how this has been true in your journey.
5. The Apostle Paul explains the weapons we have been given with which to defend against and oppose the devil's schemes each and every day. We are to put on the full armor of God. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. As a group, evaluate how well you typically use each piece of armor. Discuss what piece of armor needs to be established the most in your life? Talk about what step or steps you need to take to incorporate this piece of armor.
6. Nehemiah was wise. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried to get Nehemiah to meet in order to harm him. Nehemiah continued on in his work and did not engage them in conflict. Are you able to wait on God to defend you in situations in which engaging in conflict will not be constructive? Why or why not? Share as a group.
7. Nehemiah waited on God to protect him. He prayed for God to strengthen him as he continued to be opposed by his enemies even after the wall was rebuilt. Do you make a practice of praying for God's strength or do you rely on your own strength? Why or why not? Share as a group.
8. There are definitely times when the opposition we face is as real as Nehemiah's opposition was. In those times, going to God first allows His purposes and plans to succeed as we wholeheartedly trust Him. Many times, though, fear comes from our own insecurities and anxious hearts. Have you heard of the saying that FEAR stands for False Evidence Appearing Real? Do you see places where fear is false evidence manifesting itself as real in your life? If so, where? Share as a group.

GROUPS MATERIAL (CONT)

9. What type of opposition will we face as individuals and as a church as we try to **LIVE IT WELL**? What are some ways that we can we face the opposition together, prepared and protected by God?
10. End your time together in prayer for one another.

*What will your group's next steps will be following the Nehemiah study? Is there a specific topic you would like to pursue as a group? As an individual, will you participate in the Discover You Journey, step up as a group leader, or find a new way to serve within the church? Following this current study, groups are encouraged to help each other find their next steps as individuals and/or as groups as together we seek to **LIVE IT WELL**! Let us know what your plans are!*



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.

Victor's Crown by Darlene Zschech from
REVEALING JESUS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nBOGA6X2g>



MONDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 4:1-3

Sanballat and Tobiah were regional governors serving under the King of Persia. With the people of Jerusalem scattered and lost without the security of their city wall, Sanballat and Tobiah were able to take advantage of the people. In this passage of Scripture, Sanballat and Tobiah were incredibly angry at the people of Jerusalem because they were rebuilding the wall around the city.

Why do you think they were so angry?

Anger can often rise up inside us when we have an expectation that isn't met or when we lose our grip on someone or something we are trying to control. This is born from insecurity and fear. Sanballat and Tobiah expected the Jewish people to stay in poverty and to continue to struggle. They did not want the Jewish people to come together in unity and rebuild their community; they knew that if the Jewish people came together they would lose power and position over them.

In his anger and fear, Sanballat ridiculed and mocked the Jews. He asked several mocking questions and demeaned their work in an effort to intimidate the people so they would stop their work:

*"What are these feeble
Jews doing?"*

*"Will they restore it
for themselves?"*

"Will they sacrifice?"

"Will they finish up in a day?"

*"Will they revive the stones out
of the heaps of rubbish, and
burned ones at that?"*

*"If a fox goes up on it he will
break down their stone wall!"*

As we serve God, it is important that we understand that we too will have times of opposition. Read Jesus words in John 16:33. "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." How have you been opposed in your life as you have obeyed God?

Think about the times you have faced opposition as you served God. Have you ever been ridiculed and mocked? If so, what was said or done to intimidate you to stop the work you were doing?

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MONDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2017: (CONT)

What was the result of the intimidation? Did you slow down? Did you stop working? Did you isolate yourself or give in to the pressure?

What tends to be your first reaction when you face opposition?

Read Nehemiah 4:4-5.

Nehemiah's first reaction is to pray. If you are currently facing opposition, take time to pray and seek God in regard to your specific situation. If you are not facing opposition at this time, what do Jesus' words in John 16:33 bring about in you? Do they make you fearful, insecure, worried, or anxious? Pray about the reality that as Christians we will face opposition as we serve God. Share all your concerns and ask God to give you His peace as you experience opposition. Pray that your heart would remain close to Him through opposition.

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 4:6-23

Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod continued to be very angry at the work that was being done on the wall. Because the opposition remained persistent, the people of Jerusalem needed to remain persistent in prayer. Their persistence in prayer enlarged their faith, giving them the courage to stand against the opposition. Nehemiah encouraged the people (verse 14): "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

The people prayed, and then with God as their focus they faced their enemies. The reality that their enemies wanted to kill them and put an end to their work would have been overwhelming if they had not gone to God for strength. Because they prayed before doing anything else, even though their opposition didn't end, they knew that God would fight for them as they stood with Him in faith.

Standing with courage, Nehemiah posted families with their swords, spears, and bows at the exposed places on the wall. He encouraged the people not to be afraid but to stand strong in God. It says in verse 16 that half of the men did the work of the wall and half of the men stood equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. Not only that, but when the builders were at work they wore their swords at their side. The people who carried materials also held their materials in one hand while they carried their weapon in the other. Imagine the Israelites building the wall with their weapons ready, prepared to defend against any attacks.

We won't have to defend ourselves with swords, spears and bows, but we do need to learn from the Israelites' example. 1 Peter 5:8. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." The truth is, as followers of Christ, we have an adversary. As much as we don't want to think about it, we have an enemy who is determined to destroy us. He will do his best to lure us away from God and stop us from the work God has asked us to do.

In Revelation 12:9, we understand that Satan is the deceiver of the whole world. He will lie to us and he will do his best to deceive us and get us off course. Whenever we face opposition, we must remember to pray first, and then with God's direction, think about how Satan might be at work to deceive us and lead us astray. Satan is devious and tricky, but his schemes are not new. He will always be at work to cause division and disunity. It is important to recognize how opposition against God's work is evidence of Satan working behind the scenes.

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TUESDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2017: (CONT)

When opposition occurs, pray before doing anything else. Ask God for awareness as to how the enemy might be at work through the opposition. Ask God to search your own heart, praying Psalm 139:23 “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!” In the opposition we can act out in human emotion and we want to make sure we let God be our guide in how we respond. We also seek God’s wisdom to understand the other people and circumstances involved

Only God knows the truth. Once we have awareness, we can stand with courage against opposition. Tomorrow, we will specifically talk through the weapons God has given us. For today, please end your time in prayer. Thank God that even though Satan is at work in this world, God is greater and we have been given the victory in Jesus.

A song to end your time in worship.

Victor’s Crown by Darlene Zschech from REVEALING JESUS:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2nBOGA6X2g



WEDNESDAY MARCH 1, 2017:

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

As we have been learning this week, we will encounter opposition on our journey. It is not a matter of if but a matter of when. We know that the first step when we face opposition is to pray. In Nehemiah, we learned that the Israelites' next step in defense against the opposition was to arm themselves with swords, spears, and bows.

The Apostle Paul explains in Ephesians the weapons we have been given to enable us to defend and protect ourselves and to oppose the devil's schemes each and every day. We are to put on the full armor of God, beginning with the belt of truth buckled around our waist. We combat the lies of the enemy with the truth of the Word of God. For example, if the enemy has led you to believe God is quick to anger, search the Scriptures and find the truth, that the LORD is slow to anger. (Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Psalm 145:8, Proverbs 14:29, Proverbs 15:18, Proverbs 16:32, Proverbs 19:11, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2, Nahum 1:3.)

After you buckle the belt of truth around your waist, put the breastplate of righteousness in place. When we chase after immorality instead of Jesus, the evil one has us in his grasp. He will lie to us and tell us that the sin will be the source of our happiness. Putting on the breastplate of righteousness doesn't mean we are perfect, but it does mean that God will be the source for each and every longing we experience instead of settling for the counterfeits the enemy leads us to believe are the answer.

We also need to fit our feet with the gospel of peace. 2 Corinthians 13:11 teaches us, "Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you." God knows that the best for us comes when we continue to surrender everything to Him. As we do, His peace fills us and is our foundation as we face opposition. We are much less tempted to behave foolishly if God's peace is our footing.

The Apostle Paul also teaches us to take up the shield of faith so that the lies the enemy sends our way are quickly exposed. We wear our helmet of salvation, remembering who we are as children of God, and we take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. These three weapons are offensive weapons, a way of attacking the enemy as opposition comes against us.

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WEDNESDAY MARCH 1, 2017: (CONT)

Circle how well you think you wear each piece of armor in your life.

1 I do not wear this piece of armor in my life at all.

10 I wear this piece of armor each and every day.

Belt of Truth

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Breastplate of Righteousness

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Feet Fitted with the Gospel of Peace

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Shield of Faith

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Helmet of Salvation

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Sword of the Spirit

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

As you evaluate how well you use each piece of armor, what piece needs to be established the most in your life? What step or steps do you need to take to incorporate this piece of armor?

As the Israelites prepared to overcome opposition together as a community, as Christ-followers we all need to prepare by putting on the armor of God so that we have shared strength as we fight against the evil in our world. We want to be prepared just as the Israelites were prepared. We don't want to be caught off-guard. As we work together to bring change in our community, we will face opposition. Spend time in prayer, asking God to help each of us take steps to prepare against opposition.

THURSDAY MARCH 2, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 6:1-14

Nehemiah was wise. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried to get Nehemiah to meet in order to harm him, but Nehemiah continued on in his work and did not engage them in conflict.

Are you able to wait on God to defend you in situations in which engaging in conflict will not be constructive? Why or Why Not?

Have you ever been in a situation like Nehemiah in which someone tried to control or intimidate you with religious coercion, using shame, pressure or fear? How do you discern when this is happening in your life?

Nehemiah waited on God to protect him. He prayed for God to strengthen him as he continued to be opposed by his enemies even after the wall was rebuilt.

Do you make a practice of praying for God's strength or do you rely on our own? Why or why not?

Because Nehemiah waited on God, God's strength allowed Nehemiah to correctly discern the insincerity of his enemies. He refused to be distracted by matters that would divert his energies from rebuilding Jerusalem's wall.

How do you refuse to be distracted by matters that would divert your energies from the plans God has set for you to do?

Spend time with God in prayer. If you have trouble waiting on God to defend you in situations, share with Him your struggle. Ask Him to help you wait on Him to defend you. Pray for God to strengthen you in Him. Pray you would begin to rely on Him more and more each day. Pray that you would not be distracted by anything that would take you away from the work He is doing in you and through you. Ask Him to give you clarity and wisdom in how to go to Him first in prayer each and every day especially when you face opposition. Remember Nehemiah 8:10b as you pray: "And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

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THURSDAY MARCH 2, 2017: (CONT)

Journal your prayer here:

FRIDAY MARCH 3, 2017:

Read Nehemiah 6:1-14

Imagine the emotion and fear Nehemiah must have experienced. His prayers kept him focused on God. His prayers prepared him to fight against the opposition. God gave him the strength to stand rather than run away in fear and hide.

We face threats of many kinds in our lives today. What happens to you when you are threatened as you follow God? Are you tempted to run and hide?

If Nehemiah had wavered in the face of the threat against him, his leadership would have been discredited and the morale among the people would have plummeted.

How do you face your fears in life?

How has fear taken you off-track?

There are definitely times when the opposition we face is real as Nehemiah's opposition was. In those times, going to God first allows His purposes and plans to succeed as we wholeheartedly trust Him.

Many times fear comes from our own insecurities and anxious hearts. Have you heard of the saying that FEAR stands for False Evidence Appearing Real? Do you see places in your life where fear is false evidence that is manifesting itself as real in your life? If so, where?

What steps can you take to combat fears that are not based on truth? All of us have them. It is important that we don't let them overtake our hearts and distract us from the work God has for us to do.

Because Nehemiah stayed strong and trusted God, the enemies of the Jewish people in the surrounding nations became afraid because they realized the work had been done by the power of God. Nehemiah 6:15: "So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days." Isn't that amazing? What steps can you take to stay strong and trust God above all else? What steps can we take together as a church to **LIVE IT WELL**, so God can bring glory to Himself as He shows Himself through each of us and our church, just as He did through Nehemiah and the Israelites in the rebuilding of the wall.

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.

FOR REFLECTION

Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates),²Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm.³And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

⁵In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. ⁶In it was written, "It is reported among the nations, and Geshem also says it, that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall. And according to these reports you wish to become their king. ⁷And you have also set up prophets to proclaim concerning you in Jerusalem, 'There is a king in Judah.' And now the king will hear of these reports. So now come and let us take counsel together." ⁸Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say have been done, for you are inventing them out of your own mind." ⁹For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done." But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

NEHEMIAH 6:1-3, 5-9

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

1 PETER 4:12-16

FOR REFLECTION

But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy¹⁸ they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,²⁰ “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”²¹ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.²² But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported,²³ “We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.”²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to.²⁵ And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.”²⁶ Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

²⁷And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them,²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.

³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus,

whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.³⁵ And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.³⁸ So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail;³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice,⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

ACTS 5:17-42



WEEK 7

MARCH 4 & 5, 2017

"DEDICATION/LEGACY"
NEHEMIAH 12:27-43

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. ²⁸And the sons of the singers gathered together from the district surrounding Jerusalem and from the villages of the Netophathites; ²⁹also from Beth-gilgal and from the region of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. ³⁰And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

³¹Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate. ³²And after them went Hoshaiiah and half of the leaders of Judah, ³³and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, ³⁴Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, ³⁵and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets: Zechariah the son of Jonathan, son of Shemaiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Micaiah, son of Zaccur, son of Asaph; ³⁶and his relatives, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went before them. ³⁷At the Fountain Gate they went

up straight before them by the stairs of the city of David, at the ascent of the wall, above the house of David, to the Water Gate on the east.

³⁸The other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall, ³⁹and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Gate of Yeshanah, and by the Fish Gate and the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate; and they came to a halt at the Gate of the Guard. ⁴⁰So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; ⁴¹and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; ⁴²and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. ⁴³And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

NEHEMIAH 12:27-43

WEEKEND MESSAGE NOTES:

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at <http://www.jacobsweltec.org/#/message-resources>



GROUPS MATERIAL

Read Nehemiah 12:27-43

1. The dedication of the wall signified so much more than just its rebuilding. Share as a group some of what the rebuilding of the wall symbolized for the Israelites.
2. Each of us also has significant times of celebration on our journeys with God. For example, was there a time on your journey when you became deeply aware of God's love for you? What about a time when you understood a way in which God was rebuilding your life? Maybe it was when you took the step of baptism? How did you celebrate? How do you continue to remember and celebrate all that God has done and is doing in your life?
3. Do you realize that we are part of Nehemiah's legacy? If Nehemiah would not have led the rebuilding of the wall for the people of Israel, the people would have remained lost and scattered. So many people in our own communities are lost and far from God, much like the Israelites during the time of Nehemiah. Just as the walls in Jerusalem brought security for them, we want our church walls to provide a place of security and safety for the people of our community, so that wherever they are on their journeys we can take steps together here at Jacob's Well to know and become like Jesus. As we end this series together:
 - a. What legacy do you dream of for Jacob's Well?
 - b. What do you want our church to pass on to the next generations?
 - c. What specifically do you imagine for the people of our community and for the future generations of our church?

Read Hebrews 11

4. Each person written about in this chapter left a legacy of faith. Their faith in God drove them to **LIVE IT WELL**, which in turn created through them a beautiful legacy in Him. Which legacies in Hebrews 11 inspire and encourage you the most? Why? Talk about what you want your own legacy to be. Share a step you plan to take to move toward that legacy.
5. Throughout Nehemiah we find lists of names. Look back at chapter 3 to see the list of the builders of the wall. Chapter 7 contains the list of exiles who returned to Jerusalem, and chapter 11 presents the list of the new residents of Jerusalem. There is a list of priests and Levites in chapter 12. As we look over these lists, in light of Hebrews 11, we realize that each person played a significant part—ordinary people who were part of something extraordinary together as the people of God. As we spend our last day in this series together, think about the “legacy lists” you would want your name written on for eternity, along with the legacy lists we hope our church is known for. Share as a group some of the legacy lists that come to mind for you personally and for Jacob’s Well. (For examples, look at day 5 of the Devotions this week)
6. As we dream about our future, Living It Well as individuals and as a church, it is important that we hold on to the bigger picture. What will you take from this study that will help you keep Nehemiah’s perspective as you continue along your journey?
7. Spend time in prayer. Ask God to help you all take steps to keep Nehemiah’s perspective. Ask for His guidance and wisdom as you seek to **LIVE IT WELL**.



(MORE GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS)

Use the questions and information provided for you as is best for your group. Some groups will complete all of the questions. Some will participate in a few. This booklet is a guide.

A great activity for your group would be to have people write out their next steps on a card that says at the top: “My Plan to **LIVE IT WELL**.” Have each person put their card in an envelope and address the envelope to themselves. As the group leader, collect the envelopes. Let everyone know you will mail them out to each group member as a reminder three months from now.

MONDAY MARCH 6, 2017

Read Nehemiah 12:27-43

The dedication of the wall signified so much more than just its rebuilding. Name some of what the rebuilding of the wall symbolized for the Israelites:

Imagine the scene we read about in Nehemiah 12:27-43. Every Israelite was sought after and called to the celebration. Picture them as they gathered, singing, dancing and rejoicing together in community. Because the wall had been rebuilt, they had security within its borders. Many exiles returned and together they all reestablished their relationship as the people of God. Once more, they gave thanks for their heritage. Each of us also has significant times of celebration on our journeys with God. For example, was there a time on your journey when you became deeply aware of God's love for you? What about a time when you understood a way in which God was rebuilding your life? Maybe it was when you took the step of baptism? Share a time that was especially significant to you on your journey with God:

How did you celebrate?

Maybe God is currently rebuilding something significant. Share about what He is doing here:

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MONDAY MARCH 6, 2017: (CONT)

What are you still hoping He will rebuild?

How do you continue to remember and celebrate all that God has done and is doing in your life?

End your time in remembrance today. Express to God how grateful you are for privilege of being His child. As the Israelites celebrated the rebuilding of the wall, celebrate the way God is rebuilding your life in Him. Thank Him for the progress you have made and thank Him for the work He continues to do.

The Israelites took the step of dedicating the rebuilt wall. As we end this study, dedicate your life as an offering back to God. Commit to Him and His purposes. Give your life to Him to **LIVE IT WELL.**

TUESDAY MARCH 7, 2017

Nehemiah 13:14 - Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

Nehemiah 13:22 - Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.

Nehemiah 13:31 - And I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

“The book of Nehemiah concludes with a prayer regarding the leader’s legacy: ‘Remember me, O my God, for good (Neh. 13:31).’ Nehemiah’s heart bled for legacy, namely, a legacy of covenant faithfulness. Godly leaders recognize their time of leadership will certainly come to an end, so they lead with a view to the generation coming behind them and work to develop new leaders. May it be so among the great leaders of our day, as well.”

[http://www.thevillagechurch.net/the-village-blog/
four-leadership-lessons-from-nehemiah](http://www.thevillagechurch.net/the-village-blog/four-leadership-lessons-from-nehemiah)



As we prepare to end our study of Nehemiah together, we end with the beginning in mind. What do we mean? Just as the rebuilding of the wall was the beginning of a new season in the life of the Israelites, we want the end of this study to be the beginning of a new season in our lives as individuals and as a church as we commit to **LIVE IT WELL**.

As we read the end of the book of Nehemiah we learn that not everyone continued their pursuit of a life lived well, but Nehemiah is the one we look to emulate. Nehemiah lived for the legacy he would leave behind. Too often we get stuck in the past or buried in the present. Nehemiah reminds us to look beyond the past and the present and extend our vision to the generations who will come behind us.

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Do you realize we are part of Nehemiah's legacy? If Nehemiah would not have led the rebuilding of the wall for the people of Israel, the people would have remained lost and scattered. So many people in our own communities are lost and far from God, much like the Israelites during the time of Nehemiah. Just as the walls in Jerusalem brought security for them, we want our church walls to provide a place of security and safety for the people of our community, so that wherever they are on their journeys we can take steps together here at Jacob's Well to know and become like Jesus.

As we end this series together, what legacy do you dream of for Jacob's Well?

What do you want our church to pass on to the next generations?

What specifically do you imagine for the people of our community and for the future generations of our church?

Take time to pray about your answers.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 8, 2017

Have you ever been to a memorial service and heard a eulogy that made you hope your own might sound like it one day? What was said that you hope might be said of you?

Read Hebrews 11. Each person written about in this chapter left a legacy of faith. Their faith in God drove them to **LIVE IT WELL**, which in turn created through them a beautiful legacy in Him. Which legacies in Hebrews 11 inspire and encourage you the most? Why?

In comparison, what do you want your own legacy to be? Take time to write out your ideas here.

What are three steps you can implement over the next year that will move you toward the legacy you hope to leave one day?

1.)

2.)

3.)

Take time to pray for your future. Ask God to help you see His plans for the legacy He wants to leave through you. Ask how He might be calling you to serve in our church and in our community.

THURSDAY MARCH 9, 2017

Our hope is that this study on Nehemiah will be the beginning of a commitment for each of us to **LIVE IT WELL**. This perspective creates an opportunity to picture with God what our legacy as individuals and as a church might be. If we begin this journey to **LIVE IT WELL** with the future in mind, we will live for God and the legacy He wants to leave through us.

As we move toward the future, we will have times when we will lose sight of the bigger story God is writing. We might forget the thread our life represents in the larger tapestry God is creating. In these moments, we can remember Nehemiah's perspective and how he **LIVED IT WELL**.

As we end our study, what inspires you most about Nehemiah and his perspective?



Read Hebrews 12:1-2

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Have you ever thought about the great cloud of witnesses cheering us on as we follow God? How does this encourage you as you seek to **LIVE IT WELL**?

As we dream about our future, **LIVING IT WELL** as individuals and as a church, it is important we hold on to the bigger picture. What will you take from this study that will help you keep Nehemiah's perspective as you continue your journey?

As you pray, ask God to help you take steps to keep Nehemiah's perspective. Ask for His guidance and wisdom as you seek to **LIVE IT WELL**.

FRIDAY MARCH 10, 2017

Throughout Nehemiah we find lists of names. Look back at chapter 3 to see the list of the builders of the wall. Chapter 7 contains the list of exiles who returned to Jerusalem, and chapter 11 presents the list of the new residents of Jerusalem. There is a list of priests and Levites in chapter 12.

As we look over these lists, in light of Hebrews 11, we realize that each person played a significant part—ordinary people who were part of something extraordinary together as the people of God.

As we spend our last day in this series together, think about the “legacy lists” you would want your name written on for eternity, along with the legacy lists we hope our church is known for. Name some of the lists that come to mind for you personally and for Jacob’s Well:

My Legacy Lists: (Examples: A Legacy List of Loving and Serving Others; A Legacy List of Being Authentic)

Jacob’s Well’s Legacy Lists: (Examples: A Legacy List of Serving Our Community; A Legacy List of Being Faithful to what God asked us to do)

What do you hope your life stands for and means when all is said and done?

The truth is, every person is invited to be a part of God’s work. God doesn’t force His will on us, but He invites us to join Him. We have a choice: to join Him or to live for ourselves. When we understand the privilege it is to join the creator of the universe in the work He is doing for the redemption of our world through His Son Jesus Christ, nothing else compares. Living for something bigger than ourselves is what it means to **LIVE IT WELL**.

Take time to worship today. End this study by focusing on God and your future in Him. Talk with Him about your hopes and dreams and ask Him to show you His. Ask Him to help you understand how to **LIVE IT WELL** from now until the day you see Him face to face.

A Place to Journal and Take Prayer Requests:

If you have a family, share in doing this week's devotional together or use portions of the small group questions to generate family interaction.

LIVE *it* **WELL**

one life. one story to tell.

