



# LEADING FROM THE WALL

*Leading From the Wall - Leader's Guide*

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# Journey... Leading from the Wall

## Studies in the Book of Nehemiah

What are the defining qualities of a spiritual leader? Plenty of books have been written on the subject - enough to fill a small library, but what are the traits of a great leader as we dissect them one at a time? Reggie McNeal writes that great spiritual leaders have God-shaped hearts - a work of heart!

Nehemiah (Yahweh Comforts) is a perfect example of a leader with a God-shaped heart. "He was cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes (between 445-444 BC) meaning he was the king's personal attendant. This was no minor responsibility for a Jewish servant (with Persia ruling the world), to quite possibly the most powerful person on earth. His role, however, changed from royal cupbearer to governor of Judah forcing him to use multiple qualities of leadership to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in tumultuous times. He accomplished his work through an active prayer life, providing a vision to his followexrs, leveraging his close relationship to the king, role modeling, adaptability, and foresight." (Adapted from <https://jacl.andrews.edu/what-made-nehemiah-an-effective-leader/>.) These are just some of Nehemiah's leadership qualities we will explore together in *Leading from the Wall*.

For many, whether from the pulpit, halls of congress or their social media page leadership is about power and influence. Character has little or nothing to do with it. Today's leaders want to be first without ever being last. Few leaders are willing to be used by God and do not hesitate to use others. We are starved for what Cheryl Patton in *What Made Nehemiah an Effective Leader* describes as transformational leaders.

Transformational leaders by their very nature are spiritual leaders. Reggie McNeal writes that "Spiritual leaders are co-conspirators with God in how their lives turn out. They may make bad choices, even exercise poor judgment, commit mistakes, and miss their cues. But they also rise to the occasion, adopt courageous stands, distinguish themselves through integrity and service, and do a lot of right things. Their choices and actions-bad and good-contribute to their life's storyline. The fascinating truth is that despite themselves, God weaves it all together into a story that spiritual leaders claim as their own." (Adapted from *A Work of Heart* location 349 Kindle edition by Reggie McNeal.)

What can Nehemiah teach us about transformational leadership on campus? Nehemiah led from the ruins amidst broken down walls and continuing attack from inside and outside forces. Building spiritual communities on secular campuses is not unlike rebuilding walls that have been rammed and broken down. Developing people and groups that honor God and bless others in places of academic stress and competition is no easy task. It will demand the initiative, dedication, strategic planning, commitment, and most of all the heart of Nehemiah. Nehemiah will be our teacher on learning to lead from the wall during tumultuous times and circumstances - an example we need on campus and for life beyond the academy!

Titles and  
Topics  
Covered in  
*Leading from  
the Wall*

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Breaking  
Down *Journey*

*Journey* was created for larger weekly on or off campus meetings in a teaching format and small group discussion. The beginning story or illustration introduces the topic of study.



- **Journey Together** helps ease participants into the topic through ice-breaker related questions.



- **Road Map** is the main passage for discussion followed by questions that help draw out the topic. If you are leading *Journey*, feel free to depart from these as needed and come up with your own questions, while staying on track with the main direction of the study laid out in the leader's guide.



- **My Story** has been prepared as a continuation of the larger group meetings for smaller groups that meet during the week to check in with one another and reflect on how God is using *Journey* in their daily life. We recommend these groups be flexible in terms of location and meeting time. Also, the number of questions is limited in the *My Story* section, allowing for more personal interactions and life application.



- **Back Story** is a helpful guide for those leading out in the *Journey* series and is only included in the leader's book.

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Getting the  
most out of  
*Journey*

Here's what you're going to need for *Leading from the Wall*:

- Good soil – an open and receptive heart
- Working the soil – Determination and diligence
- Hunger and thirst – Desire to follow God as He leads
- We also strongly advise reading the entire book of Nehemiah since *Journey* only zeros in on selected episodes. Use this study guide for your group reading/discussion. The important thing is to really lean into what Nehemiah can teach us about being a transformational leader. In fact, set it aside if it's getting in the way of hearing his story. Remember, God and His ways are the real study, not *Journey*!

Best Practices: The five S's of hearing and discerning God's voice

- **Seek:** Pray for God to open up the passage for you. Is there a promise for you to claim, a sin to confess, a word for you to follow, an insight to share?
- **Soak:** Read the passage each day and write down any observations, thoughts, questions, connections, or anything God speaks to you about the passage.
- **Seal:** Seal God's word to you deep within your heart by taking some time to meditate on the most important truth to you this week. Ask God to open the deeper recesses of your heart to teach you what you need most for your life this week.
- **Script:** Journal or write if even a few lines, noting the ways that God spoke to you from the passage, your meditation, or our group time together. This will help you keep better track of God's voice and the way He is speaking through scripture.
- **Share:** Share with someone what you are learning from your time with God in *Journey*. As you share what you are learning, it will help drive God's word home to you even more and you will notice how God will use what He has revealed to you to bless others.

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*Journey*  
Covenant

I want to follow Jesus in the noble purpose He has for me. I want to participate in *Journey* to enhance my own relationship with God this year. I will commit to doing the weekly assignments and small group meetings.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My best times of availability are

Morning: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

# Trust in God!

Nelson Silva, DMin, Associate Youth Director,  
Kentucky Tennessee Conference

"All they had to eat was bread and bananas." That was the uninvited raw report from a stranger in a casual conversation about a group of teen campers. "That was the only food they had for the whole day," the man commented. These banana sandwiches are known as: "Hunger killer."

I usually feel sympathy upon hearing such reports. It makes me feel bad...but then I move on. At times, I have made a social media post or even commented about it to somebody. This time around it struck me differently because I knew the people the man was talking about. I could have said a prayer for them and let it go (James 2:16-17). However, the thought of hungry kids on a camping trip kept invading my mind. *Somebody had better do something about it*, I thought. And then, suddenly, a thought came to mind, *can I do something about it?*

There are times when we are the answer to our own prayers. In my case, it's been hard to come to that realization. In Nehemiah's case, it took him 4 months. Was Nehemiah struggling with feelings of sympathy? Was God stirring his heart toward compassion? The difference between the two is that compassion moves you to action.



1. Share a time when you received bad news
2. Share an issue that you prayed about that ended up with you being the answer to your own prayer



## Nehemiah 1

1. What do we know about Nehemiah?
2. Nehemiah means: "Consoling breath/spirit of the Lord." How did Nehemiah live up to this name?
3. What was Nehemiah's response to the news of Jerusalem's broken-down walls? What does prayer/fasting as his first response tell you about him as a leader?
4. Read the prayer again (5-11). Identify its sections. What can we learn about God, Nehemiah, and Israel?
5. What role do you think that turning first to God played in Nehemiah's approach to the king?
6. What impact do you think Nehemiah's spiritual life and practice played in being chosen as the king's personal servant?
7. What burdens or concerns do you have about your campus? How does Nehemiah's story inspire you to prayer and action?
8. In what stage of your life are you right now?
  - Things are going well at school, work, and home
  - You just got bad news and don't know what to do
  - You have been praying for something for the longest time
  - God is revealing that you are the answer to your own prayer, but it scares you!

Spend time listening to one another. Resist the urge to give advice or move on quickly. How can this group pray for you?

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

John 10:10



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What burdens and concerns keep coming back to your mind?
3. How are you feeling that God is saying that you are the answer to your own prayer?



## Back Story

We know very little about Nehemiah. Perhaps, like Daniel and his friends, he was part of an elite family of Judah. We also know that he worked as a cupbearer to the king (most likely not as a slave). The job was more than tasting drinks and food to avoid poisoning the king. The cupbearer was also a chief minister and a protector of the Persian seal, which would have made Nehemiah the highest Jew in the Persian government. Interestingly, Nehemiah kept his Hebrew name, unlike Esther and Mordecai, who were given Mesopotamian deities' names: Ishtar and Marduk. Another contended area is the belief by some scholars that Nehemiah was a eunuch; however, such theory is challenged by the fact that some cupbearers were not castrated. Additionally, the law of Moses forbade eunuchs from participating in the assembly of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:1). Nehemiah could not have been allowed to lead such extensive reform in Judah had he been a eunuch.

Nehemiah received a report from his blood brother, Hanani, about Jerusalem – later Nehemiah appointed him as mayor of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:2). The partially rebuilt wall and the absence of gates left Jerusalem vulnerable to attacks. The people had moved back to Judah, echoing the Exodus from Egypt to the promised land, in two phases. The first one was led by Zerubbabel in 538 B.C. under King Cyrus' rulership (Ezra 2:2). The second one was led by Esdras in 458 B.C. (Ezra 7:8). Unbeknownst to Nehemiah, he was about to lead the third exodus 13 years later, in 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 1:1).

Among the challenges Nehemiah faced was the fact that King Artaxerxes stopped the work in Jerusalem due to a petition from the leaders of the area (Ezra 4:7-23). Additionally, Nehemiah risked his life when appearing sad before the king. Was that on purpose or could he not hide his heart anymore after months of praying, fasting, and meditating?

The words of Jesus come to mind. *“In this world you will have trouble”* (John 16:33). There are times when the problems that you or someone close to you are going through seem insurmountable and suffocating. However, Jesus' statement does not end there. He said, *“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

From this point on, the narrative turns even more compelling; Nehemiah becomes the answer to his own prayer. Instead of preventing Nehemiah from building the walls of Jerusalem, King Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem with resources to fulfill his mission. That was the easy part. Even though it was clear that God was leading, the building of the wall became challenging when Nehemiah faced resistance. What follows is a lesson on vision, leadership, dealing with opposition, and depending on God. Nehemiah was not a builder, a commander, a governor, or a prophet; however, he did all those things only in the power of God. The wall was rebuilt in 52 days (about 1 month 3 weeks), a record time when considering the exhaustion of the people and the constant resistance they faced.

We have much to learn from Nehemiah's journey. It began painfully but finished miraculously!

# Humility

Stephen Erich, MA, Campus Minister,  
Greater New York Conference

Three years ago I moved to New York City. At first it seemed like everyone was emotionally unstable. Every other person on the subway was either talking to themselves, blasting music, dancing, or crying. Nowhere in the world had I seen anything like it. Eventually I realized that these weren't all crises, but that in New York, constantly surrounded by strangers, you learn to live your life in public. And people let you.

Residents of New York have learned to embrace this. Look it up on Reddit and you'll see things like "best city on earth to cry in public," and, jokingly, "if you haven't cried in public in New York they actually evict you." There's a kind of humility about it all - an acceptance that we all have emotional moments and we don't have to hide them, even around strangers. It's now become one of my favorite things about the city.

In this week's passage, we see Nehemiah express a difficult emotion in a public way. He was feeling immense pain after receiving bad news from his brother. He took the time to process it with God. And then he took a risk by sharing it. And it was that vulnerable moment that sparked an adventure that would forever change his life and that would become a story told thousands of years later.



1. Have you ever cried in public? What happened?
2. What is one thing you are really good at observing, when other people might miss it?



## Nehemiah 2:1-3

1. Why does Nehemiah feel the need to mention that it was his first time appearing sad in the king's presence?
2. What was the relationship of a cupbearer to a king in Nehemiah's time?
3. Why might Nehemiah have been afraid when the king noticed his sadness?
4. How does Nehemiah describe what he's going through?
5. Look ahead in the text. What was the end result of Nehemiah's vulnerability with the king?
6. What might have happened instead, had Nehemiah been too proud to express his pain to someone else?
7. Humility can be defined as an accurate understanding of reality: thinking neither more nor less of yourself than you ought. How do you see this at play in today's reading?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. Can you remember a time when you were vulnerable with someone and it resulted in something positive?
3. How might skillfully sharing your emotions demonstrate humility and free others up to live more authentically themselves?



## Back Story

Humility offers us two powerful leadership tools. One tool helps us avoid burnout. The other helps us inspire those we lead.

Burnout happens to leaders when we fail to manage our expectations for ourselves. When we find ourselves consistently over promising and under delivering, we start to dread our work. We get disappointed, procrastinate, and ultimately start looking for something else to do with our time. But when we understand humility not as beating up on ourselves or neglecting ourselves, but simply as the accurate understanding of ourselves, our situation, and those around us, we can start to fix these expectations. We can start to accept that we have certain strengths and certain weaknesses, and that some things affect us differently than other people. And when we accept that, we can start to factor it into our decision making. Sustainability in any leadership role requires this awareness.

Nehemiah exhibits this awareness of himself and the world around him in the verses leading up to this week's passage. In Nehemiah 1:3 he hears the terrible news about Jerusalem from a trustworthy source - his own brother. This itself is a point to remember, in a time when it is so easy to encounter misinformation about things that matter to us. He found a reliable source and he took it seriously. Nehemiah then takes the time to process how it was affecting him. Verse four says that he mourned, fasted, and prayed for days. Getting to know yourself takes time, and prayer and journaling are great ways to work on that. Finally, in the last verse of chapter 1, Nehemiah states: "I was cupbearer to the king." In the midst of all of this - the tragic news, the days of mourning - Nehemiah remembers his present situation as well. He knows what he is doing and who he is with. He is a great example of how to have an accurate understanding of reality - and of how to be humble.

But as leaders, understanding is just the first step. To lead, it also matters that you have the courage to express what you understand in ways that others can receive it and act on it. This is where the rubber meets the road, and we see what we often associate with humility. To know the situation and to know yourself means that you will inevitably become aware of your own pains and weaknesses, and you will have to decide whether or not to share them with anyone else. Like Nehemiah, you will find yourself experiencing difficult emotions as you wish for ways to change something about the state of the world. And like Nehemiah, you will have the chance to be true to who you are around other people, or to cover up the vulnerable parts. It's risky to share them. But perhaps, like Nehemiah, you might be surprised to find that in sharing your pain and weakness, others will become more curious and generous toward you. And in being free, you might give others permission to become free themselves.

# Initiative

Natasha Richards, MDiv student and  
Campus Ministry Liaison at Andrews University

According to Webster's dictionary, initiative is defined as "an introductory step" or "the ability to assess and initiate things independently."

Have you ever experienced a moment where you took the initiative to start something new, make a change, or pursue a goal without being prompted or instructed by others? Perhaps it was starting a new project, reaching out to someone in need, or taking a leadership role in a group or organization.

Think about how you felt during that experience. Did you feel a sense of empowerment, purpose, or excitement? Or maybe you felt nervous, unsure, or hesitant? Understanding our past experiences with taking initiative can help us grasp the importance and impact of this trait in our personal and professional development.



1. Share a personal experience where you took the initiative to start something new or make a positive change. What motivated you to take that step, and what did you learn from the experience?
2. What keeps you from stepping up when you know you should?



## Nehemiah 2:4-9

1. What initial emotions do you think Nehemiah might have experienced upon hearing about the state of Jerusalem's walls? How did these emotions drive him to take decisive action?
2. Reflecting on Nehemiah's prayerful approach before taking initiative, why is it essential for us to seek God's guidance and wisdom when making significant decisions or pursuing new endeavors?
3. Nehemiah faced opposition and challenges while rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. How can adversity and obstacles strengthen our resolve and resilience when taking initiative in our own lives?
4. In Nehemiah's conversation with the king, he presented a clear plan and vision for rebuilding the walls. How important is having a well-thought-out strategy and vision when starting something new?
5. Nehemiah inspired and mobilized a team of people to work together toward a common goal. How can effective teamwork and collaboration enhance the impact of our initiatives and projects?
6. Fear of failure or rejection can often hinder us from taking initiative. How can we overcome these fears and develop the courage to step out of our comfort zones?
7. How can this group pray for you today?

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
  2. What new steps have you been taking this week?
  3. What would you like to initiate in your ACF chapter?
- 



## Back Story

Nehemiah, a respected cupbearer serving in the royal court of King Artaxerxes I of Persia, lived a comfortable life in the opulent surroundings of the palace. However, his heart was connected to his homeland, Jerusalem, even though he had never set foot in its streets. Nehemiah had heard tales of Jerusalem's glory days from his ancestors, stories of a thriving city with bustling markets, majestic temples, and strong, protective walls.

One day, while fulfilling his duties in the palace, Nehemiah received a visit from Hanani, his brother, who had recently returned from a journey to Jerusalem. With a heavy heart and tears in his eyes, Hanani recounted the grim reality of Jerusalem's current state. The once-mighty walls lay in ruins, the gates were burned, and the people lived in constant fear of attack and oppression. The news struck Nehemiah like a thunderbolt, stirring a deep sense of sorrow and compassion within him.

Nehemiah's initial shock soon transformed into a profound burden. He could not bear to see his people suffer and his ancestral city in such disarray. This burden birthed a fervent desire to act, to do something tangible to restore Jerusalem's dignity and security.

Instead of remaining passive or resigning himself to despair, Nehemiah turned to God in prayer and fasting. He poured out his heart before the Lord, seeking guidance, wisdom, and courage to undertake what seemed like an impossible task. Nehemiah's prayer wasn't just a plea for personal comfort; it was a plea for God's intervention and empowerment to fulfill a divine calling.

After days of prayer and reflection, Nehemiah sensed a clear leading from God. He felt a stirring in his spirit, urging him to approach King Artaxerxes and seek permission and resources to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. This was a risky endeavor, as approaching the king uninvited could result in severe consequences, even death. However, Nehemiah's trust in God's providence outweighed his fear of the king's wrath.

With trembling but resolute faith, Nehemiah approached the king, ready to present his request. Before doing so, he crafted a detailed plan, outlining the steps needed to rebuild the walls and restore Jerusalem's defenses. Armed with faith, vision, and strategic planning, Nehemiah stood before the king and made his bold appeal.

To everyone's surprise, King Artaxerxes not only granted Nehemiah's request but also provided him with letters of safe passage, timber from the royal forests, and an escort of soldiers for protection. The king recognized Nehemiah's genuine concern for his people and entrusted him with the authority and resources needed to accomplish his mission.

Nehemiah's journey of initiative didn't end with the king's approval. He faced numerous challenges and opposition from enemies who sought to thwart his efforts. Yet, Nehemiah remained steadfast in his faith, leading the people of Jerusalem with courage, perseverance, and unwavering trust in God's provision.

Through Nehemiah's story, we see a powerful example of how taking initiative, fueled by prayer, vision, and reliance on God, can lead to transformational change and restoration. As we delve deeper into Nehemiah 2:4-9, let's draw inspiration from his journey and glean timeless principles for our own lives and leadership roles.

# Strategic Thinking

Chris May, Director and Campus Minister Advent House,  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Brandon Cathey, Advent House Alum

As a military cadet in the NSCC I was accepted to staff recruit training (also known as boot camp). I was appointed to the MAA's (Master-At-Arms) which was the security force for the training. Unlike other departments like medical or the drill instructors, our group of MAA's had little to no respect. Because we were on an active duty military base which had its own military police, there was little for us to do. The MAA's were then tasked with janitorial jobs and escorting recruits to sickbay. But the lack of respect for us was not unwarranted, for the MAA's have little respect themselves. Our barracks were always trashed and the MAA's hadn't passed an inspection in several years.

This was a new environment for me. I was coming from the highest ranked and most disciplined units in the New England region. When caring for my room I made it spotless. One day when two MAA cadets were arguing about how to best make a bed with hospital corners they decided to examine my room to settle the debate. When they saw how spotless it was it drew a crowd of other MAA's. I took this opportunity to rally the men with a speech. I told them no one respects us. No one respects us, because we've given them nothing to respect. But what if we did? What if we were the first generation of MAA's to not just pass the upcoming inspection, but to exceed its standard? I told them, if you're good at making hospital corners, make everyone's beds. If you're good at shining boots, shine everyone's boots. If you're good at ironing uniforms, iron everyone's uniforms. No one's good at everything, but together everything can be done well.

That year we crushed the inspection. Several days later the XO (the second highest ranked officer) came to speak with me. He said, "Word on the street is you're the man responsible for the MAA's passing inspection." "No sir," I replied. "I just motivated the men, they're the ones that did the work."



1. Have you ever noticed a discouraging problem in your community and felt called to fix it?
2. How easy or hard has it been to build your community on your campus?



## Nehemiah 2:10-20

1. Why do you think Nehemiah went to see the city alone and without telling the local leaders?
2. One of the hardest parts of leadership is inspiring others to your cause. In your opinion, what was it about Nehemiah's words that led others to his cause so quickly?
3. In the beginning of this passage, Nehemiah is examining the condition of Jerusalem and his people. Take a minute to think: What is the condition of your ACF chapter or faith community? How can we inspire others to help build Christ's kingdom on our campus?
4. In verses 10 and 20, Nehemiah is criticized by the foreign officials. Have you ever faced opposition from others when doing God's work?
5. What do you think contributed to Nehemiah's confidence in dismissing his critics?
6. While doing God's work, what contributes to your confidence when confronting obstacles?

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”

James 1:5-6



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What challenges are you facing as a Christian on campus?
3. How can this group best pray for you?



## Back Story

Before the book of Nehemiah was written, Israel as a nation stopped trusting God and were then delivered into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon. At that time, some Israelites were relocated to Babylon (see Daniel 1). Later Babylon is taken over by the Medes and Persians (see Daniel 5).

During the Persian empire, King Cyrus allowed people to return to Jerusalem (see Ezra 6). Later, at the request of Ezra, King Artaxerxes from Persia sends materials and the Israelites rebuild the temple (see Ezra 7).

Nehemiah’s story starts with him being the cupbearer to a later King Artaxerxes, who was also a Persian king. In chapter one, Nehemiah asks for permission to help his people rebuild Jerusalem and the king grants him permission and gives him material to help.

Our passage today starts with the mention of two people: Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite. It’s important to know that these two different people and the groups they are from are foreigners; they were not Israelites. Throughout the book of Nehemiah, they are seen harassing and threatening the Israelites.

Next, we have Nehemiah examining the ruins of Jerusalem on his own. Although we don’t know exactly why, the Bible specifically mentions it. What are your thoughts? One thought might be that he wanted to see the whole situation without others influencing him or downplaying how bad it was.

After seeing the wall, Nehemiah inspires the locals. There are some good leadership qualities we can take from his speech in verse 17 and 18. One leadership trait is that he refers to the group as “we,” showing he was in this with them. Also, instead of pointing blame, he focuses on fixing the situation. When talking about the city’s condition, he also doesn’t downplay their situation, but rather keeps it real.

Earlier in chapter 1, we learned that Nehemiah is the cupbearer to the king. Although this was a trusted position, it is not a high one. Nehemiah likely spent a lot of time in the presence of other high-ranking leaders, like the king. Nehemiah was a humble man who knew what leadership looked like.

As you talk about how to build Christ’s kingdom on campus, consider what the kingdom of God is like. For extra insights read Matthew 18:1-5 and Matthew 13. One thing to note in Matthew 13 is that these things apply to the world as we know it now, showing that the kingdom of heaven is currently on earth. It is not just something we hope for in the future.

At the end, Nehemiah responds to his critics. Although he is a humble man, he is able to be bold when criticized because of who God is. Not only does Nehemiah have faith in God, but he has a faith that actively works. He states in verse 20 that, as God’s servants, they actively choose to work with God. We see this taught in James 1:4-17.

# Perseverance

Natasha Richards, MDiv student and  
Campus Ministry Liaison at Andrews University

The mantra that has guided me through many challenges in life is: “Plan your work and work your plan.” This simple yet profound statement reminds me of the power of focus and determination when I have a clear plan in place and trust that God is guiding me every step of the way.

Have you ever encountered a situation where you had to push through difficulties to achieve a goal? Perhaps it was a project deadline, a personal milestone, or a dream you were pursuing. One of the toughest tests of determination is persevering when faced with discouragement and distractions. Yet, it is during these moments that having a strong sense of purpose and persistence becomes crucial.

Remember, there is a greater force within us than anything that stands against us. With unwavering perseverance and a steadfast focus on our goals, we can overcome obstacles and achieve remarkable success.

Let’s explore together the importance of perseverance, share our experiences of pushing through challenges, and encourage one another to stay committed to our dreams and aspirations.



1. **Share a Moment:** Take a moment to reflect on a time when you faced a significant challenge or obstacle. How did you persevere and push through to achieve your goal? What lessons did you learn from that experience?
2. **Role Models:** Discuss a person, either historical or someone you know personally, who exemplifies perseverance and resilience. What qualities or actions of this individual inspire you to keep going when faced with adversity? How can we emulate these qualities in our own lives?



## Nehemiah 4:1-15

1. **Identifying Adversaries:** In Nehemiah 4:1-3, Nehemiah faces opposition and ridicule from Sanballat and Tobiah. Who or what are the “Sanballats and Tobiahs” in your life or community, representing challenges or discouragements that threaten your perseverance? How can we effectively respond to such adversities?
2. **Overcoming Doubt:** Nehemiah’s resolve is tested by doubts and fears among the people rebuilding the walls. What doubts or fears have you experienced while pursuing a goal or facing a challenge? How did you overcome these emotions and stay committed to your goal?
3. **Strategic Planning:** Nehemiah implements strategic measures, such as stationing guards and rallying the people, to protect the builders and maintain progress on the walls. How can strategic planning and preparation help us overcome obstacles and to persevere?
4. **Unity and Collaboration:** Despite facing external threats, the people of Jerusalem unite and work together to support one another. How does unity and collaboration contribute to resilience and perseverance in achieving common goals? How can we foster a sense of unity within our group on campus?
5. **Encouragement and Support:** Nehemiah encourages the people with words of inspiration and reminds them of God’s strength. How important is encouragement and support from leaders and peers in maintaining perseverance during tough times? How can we provide that support for one another?

6. Learning from Setbacks: Nehemiah encounters setbacks and delays in the rebuilding process but remains steadfast in his determination. What lessons can we learn from Nehemiah's response to setbacks? How can setbacks or failures contribute to our growth and resilience?
7. Personal Application: Reflecting on Nehemiah's perseverance and leadership, how can we apply the principles of resilience, determination, and trust in God's strength to our own lives and goals? What steps can we take to cultivate a mindset of perseverance in the face of challenges?

"This one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:13, 14



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What areas do you need to persevere in right now?
3. Who can you encourage to keep keeping on?



## Back Story

In the ancient city of Jerusalem, the echoes of history resonated through its cobblestone streets, whispering tales of glory and despair. Among the rubble and remnants of a once-majestic city stood Nehemiah, a man of unwavering faith and indomitable spirit. As Nehemiah surveyed the broken walls and gates of Jerusalem, his heart swelled with a mix of sorrow and determination. He knew that rebuilding these walls wasn't just about physical structures; it was about restoring hope, safety, and identity to a people who had endured years of hardship and exile.

But as Nehemiah gathered the people and laid the foundation for the monumental task ahead, whispers of doubt and mockery filled the air. Sanballat, a cunning adversary, and Tobiah, a skeptic, scoffed at Nehemiah's vision, seeking to sow seeds of discord and despair. Yet, Nehemiah remained undeterred. With every stone placed upon another, he infused the rebuilding effort with a spirit of unity, resilience, and unwavering faith in God's providence. Each day brought new challenges - threats of attack, internal divisions, and weariness among the workers - but Nehemiah's leadership and steadfast resolve inspired the people to press on.

As the walls rose higher and stronger, so did the determination of those who labored tirelessly. They worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other, ready to defend their progress against any adversary. Nehemiah's words echoed through the city, rallying the hearts of the people: "*Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.*"

Through sweat, tears, and prayers, Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem persevered. The walls that once lay in ruins now stood as a testament to their resilience, unity, and unyielding faith. The city was reborn, not just in bricks and mortar, but in the spirit of a community that refused to be defined by its past struggles.

Nehemiah's journey from brokenness to restoration is a timeless tale of courage, perseverance, and the power of collective effort. It teaches us that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, with faith as our foundation and unity as our strength, we can rebuild, renew, and rise stronger than ever before. This is a lesson for all of life, but especially true as we work to erect walls of spiritual life on campus.

# Adaptability

Ron Pickell, DMin, Public Campus Ministry Director  
for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
and pastor of LIFE Church, UC Berkeley

We traditionally select new student leaders for the coming year in December for two reasons. First, it gives our current officers a semester to work with the leaders. Second, our new leaders are in place through the summer to hit the ground running come fall semester. As I say, that's how we usually select new officers. But one year we could not find people to accept any of the offices of president, secretary, treasurer, or outreach. When I pushed our group, no one stepped up. That's when I knew that we had to adapt to the situation and here's what we did. Instead of continuing to push for a new slate of officers, we began to plan our winter/spring semester with no designated leaders.

The first calendar item was our Welcome Back gathering after Christmas break. Since we had no leaders we just started brainstorming what this and other semester events would include and who would lead out. Eventually, leaders emerged and we planned the semester one event at a time. It turned out that people were willing to help; they just didn't want to or were hesitant to assume a leadership title. We could have just left for Christmas break with no plans at all and with no one stepping up to help, but by adapting and moving forward we were able to plan a really great second semester program.



1. Describe a time when you have had to change course.
2. Do you find it difficult or easy to adjust to a new set of circumstances? Describe.



## Nehemiah 4:16-23

1. What kind of pressure do you think Nehemiah was feeling on top of the wall?
2. Nehemiah was facing opposition from without and fear from within his own ranks. Which do you think was more difficult to deal with?
3. What do you think of Nehemiah's plan to keep working while staying prepared for battle? Why didn't he just place the project on pause until things calmed down?
4. The workers had to juggle their weapons in one hand while building the wall with the other. How many things are you having to keep in the air right now? What is one thing you would most like to drop?
5. Nehemiah had to make some split-second decisions. What quick decisions have you most recently had to make? How did it work out?
6. What are some ways your chapter needs to adapt to better accomplish your mission?



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What are some ways you need to adapt to better serve others?
3. How is God using plan B in your life right now?

"To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

1 Corinthians 9:22, 23



## Back Story

The Oxford dictionary's definition of adaptation may seem circular, as it defines adaptation as the action or process of adapting or being adapted. However, a more insightful explanation from biology defines adaptation as a change or process by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment.

During the COVID-19 crisis, adaptive leadership emerged as a crucial necessity worldwide. Harvard Business Review defines adaptive leadership as the ability to anticipate future needs, articulate those needs to build collective support and understanding, adapt responses based on continuous learning, and demonstrate accountability through transparency in decision-making processes.

The article further delineates the 4-A's of adaptive leadership:

- Anticipation
- Articulation
- Adaptation
- Accountability

(Nehemiah's adaptive leadership style exemplifies each of these principles. He anticipated opposition, articulated an adaptive course of action, followed through with his plan, and ensured accountability within the team.)

Yet, beyond these established principles, Nehemiah's leadership reveals an additional adaptive principle - one that transcends conventional understanding. We might term it the fifth A: Assurance or trust in God.

It can be argued that Nehemiah's remarkable adaptability stemmed from his unwavering trust in God. From the outset, upon learning of Jerusalem's dilapidated walls, Nehemiah turned to prayer before even approaching King Artaxerxes. Throughout the building project, Nehemiah consistently sought God's guidance. When faced with significant opposition, he encouraged his workers not to lose heart, affirming, *"Our God will fight for us!"*

Nehemiah's ability to change course - from leaving his prestigious role as cupbearer to lead a rebuilding effort in Jerusalem to organizing the restoration of the city walls - was grounded in his firm belief that God was with him, leading the way forward. He understood that while holding firm to his purpose, adapting strategies was essential for success.

As George Bernard Shaw aptly noted, *"Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."* Theodore Roosevelt echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that *"Life necessitates change, and fear of the unknown inhibits growth."* Christopher Alexander observed *"In practice master plans fail - because they create totalitarian order, not organic order. They are too rigid; they cannot easily adapt to the natural and unpredictable changes that inevitably arise in the life of a community."*

However, Nehemiah's example predates these observations by millennia. His ability to hold steadfast to his purpose while adapting to achieve his goals demonstrates the timeless truth that resilience coupled with adaptability leads to success. Nehemiah's leadership not only ensured the completion of the project but also surprised even his staunchest opponents with its swift execution.

# Attention to Others

Akehil Johnson, Adventist Christian Fellowship  
Student Association President, 2024

Imagine you and your best friend are talking and in the midst of your exciting conversation, you both say the same word at the exact same time - jinx! Maybe it was your friend who jinxed you! You might follow up by saying one of you owes the other a soda, or money, or a favor! It's a fun game to play with unexpected coincidences. Besides, most people forget about the indebted favor because friendship is more important than a silly game. My best friend loves when we have jinx moments because she ends up jinxing me before I can jinx her. But could you imagine if she took this game seriously? I would have a huge debt to her that I wouldn't be able to repay. I rely on our friendship and for her to not call in her debts, or I might not be able to pay up. But what happens when leaders are found guilty of using their position to take advantage of others? Let's see what Nehemiah can teach us about speaking truth to power and standing up for justice.



1. Describe a time when someone took advantage of you.
2. When have you ever stood up for someone who was being exploited?



## Nehemiah 5:1-13

1. Why do you think the lower class Jews felt compelled to borrow money to pay their taxes?
2. How did the economic situation described in Nehemiah 5:1-3 affect the unity and well-being of the community? In what ways does this reflect your campus community?
3. How did Nehemiah react to the complaints of the people, and what actions did he take to address their concerns, as described in Nehemiah 5:8-9? What lessons can you draw from his actions and apply to your own leadership experiences?
4. What does Nehemiah's response reveal about his character and leadership qualities in terms of caring for the welfare of others?
5. Nehemiah makes a commitment to restore what was taken from the people and to stop the exploitation they were facing. How does his leadership reflect integrity, fairness, and accountability in addressing social injustices?
6. How can Nehemiah's example of leading from a position of moral authority and righteous indignation inspire your ACF Chapter to advocate for justice and equity on your campus?
7. Reflecting on Nehemiah's actions, what practical steps can we take on campus to demonstrate compassion and care for those in need within our campus community?



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
2. What issues of injustice is your campus dealing with right now that you could weigh in on?
3. What leadership role is God prompting you to take to help make a difference?

"Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"

Amos 5:24



## Back Story

Injustice can blind us to the plight of those right before our eyes. Instead of offering someone a hand up, we can selfishly use them to make our own privileged position even better. Chapter 5 reveals Nehemiah's surprise in discovering such injustice among his own community. While rebuilding the physical walls of the city, Nehemiah found himself having to tear down some economic walls that the rich and powerful were erecting between themselves and their less fortunate fellow Jews. Lower class Jews found themselves in the grips of a very unforgiving debt forgiveness program. They had literally become indentured servants, owing their property, homes, livestock, their lives, and the lives of their children and grandchildren, to nobles and lords.

Nehemiah is furious that these rich leaders would choose to hold debts against their fellow Jews instead of working together to build up the good of the nation and helping everyone to prosper. Nehemiah can't believe that instead of caring for each other, the rich found a way to get richer on the backs of the struggling poor. It's in this moment that we see Nehemiah make a stand and correct this great injustice. If he had not stepped in they would not have completed the wall and their selfish greed would have crippled the nation.

Refusing to pander to the rich and powerful is one of Nehemiah's greatest leadership moments. He had risen to an influential position among his own people. Power like Nehemiah had acquired is extremely difficult to risk losing. Stepping up and endangering his position and influence is where Nehemiah is most like Jesus. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Philippians that Jesus...

*"Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!"*

Philippians 2:6-8

Like Jesus, Nehemiah stood up against injustice and risked his own standing among the powerful Jerusalem leaders in order to correct what was wrong and unjust. Standing for what's right and defending others who are being taken advantage of and exploited is an act of true leadership and one of the most impactful ways of expressing who God is wherever we are and especially on campus!

# Generosity

Makenzy Jean, MDiv, Campus Minister,  
University of Missouri, Kansas City,  
Kansas Nebraska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

In the midst of 2020's Covid-19 pandemic, a period of profound isolation and reflection, I found myself reassessing my purpose. After working as a university chaplain in Des Moines, the idea for Associated Humanity was born – a cause-based clothing brand aimed at supporting local nonprofits through our sales. This initiative, driven by a desire to make a tangible difference, quickly garnered community support, highlighting the enduring power of collective generosity even in challenging times.

This journey served as a prelude to rediscovering Nehemiah's story, specifically in Nehemiah 5:14-19, where his leadership shines through acts of selfless generosity. Nehemiah, in his efforts to rebuild Jerusalem, chose not to exploit his authority for personal gain, a testament to his commitment to the welfare of his people and his reverence for God.

Our reflection on Nehemiah's journey invites us to question how we can embody such generosity. It prompts us to look beyond our immediate circumstances and consider our potential to positively contribute to our communities. This lesson, while inspired by modern acts of kindness, ultimately circles back to Nehemiah's ancient example, urging us to live out values of compassion and service in our daily lives, regardless of our position.



1. What generous acts have you experienced?
2. Who has been an example of a generous spirit in your life?



## Nehemiah 5:14-19

1. What motivated Nehemiah to not take the food allowance due to the governor, and how does this decision reflect on his leadership? (Nehemiah 5:14-15)
2. Reflect on a time when you had the opportunity to take more than you needed but chose not to. What motivated your decision?
3. How did Nehemiah's actions contrast with those of the previous governors, and what impact do you think this had on the people of Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 5:15)
4. In what ways can you demonstrate similar generosity and selflessness in your daily life, especially within your ACF community?
5. Nehemiah mentions hosting 150 people at his table without burdening the people. How can we apply this example of hospitality and generosity in today's context? (Nehemiah 5:17)
6. Consider a situation where you could use your position or resources to help others without expecting anything in return. What would that look like for you?
7. What specific provisions did Nehemiah make for the daily meals at his table, and how does this reflect his care for those he led? (Nehemiah 5:18)
8. How can the principles of fairness and generosity guide your interactions with peers and faculty at your university?
9. Nehemiah asks God to remember him for all he has done for the people. How do you want to be remembered in your community and by God? (Nehemiah 5:19)

10. How does the fear of God influence Nehemiah's leadership and decisions? Reflect on how your own faith influences your decisions and actions. (Nehemiah 5:15)
11. Discuss how Nehemiah's approach to leadership and generosity can inspire actions within your ACF group. What specific steps can you take to follow his example?
12. Reflect on the balance Nehemiah maintains between serving others and his own responsibilities. How can you maintain a similar balance in your academic and spiritual life?

"Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it..."

Proverbs 3:27



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What examples of great leadership have you encountered this week?
3. What ways is God calling you to give back to the ACF Chapter this semester (or next)?



## Back Story

In the historical context of Nehemiah 5:14-19, Nehemiah, as governor, faced a pivotal moment. Jerusalem, still recovering from the exile, was in a fragile state, both physically with its walls and spiritually within its community. Unlike his predecessors, Nehemiah chose a path of selflessness and communal care, setting a profound example of leadership and generosity in times of rebuilding.

For a student on campus today, Nehemiah's choices resonate deeply. College life, much like Jerusalem's rebuilding phase, is a period of personal development and community formation. Students often navigate their own "rebuilding" processes - cultivating identity, forming social bonds, and contributing to the campus culture. In this environment, embodying Nehemiah's principles means advocating for and engaging in acts of generosity, whether through volunteering, supporting peers, or initiating campus-wide projects that benefit others. Just as Nehemiah prioritized the well-being of his community over personal gain, students have the opportunity to lead and inspire change, fostering an atmosphere of support and unity within their campus communities, echoing Nehemiah's timeless message of selfless service.

# Resilience

Ron Pickell, DMin, Public Campus Ministry Director  
for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
and pastor of LIFE Church, UC Berkeley

Darrel Lindensmith, MA Religion, MS Psychology,  
Pastor, and Campus Minister at North Dakota State University

I have a fortune cookie reading that I taped on my office desk light from the first restaurant students treated me to when I began ministry at UC Berkeley. It reads, *"In order to be successful, you will have to commit yourself for some time."* It was a reminder of what it might take to rebuild our UCB ACF group and transition the church into a campus church.

I soon discovered that time was one of the factors in this herculean effort, but resilience was probably an even more important one. Over the years there have been many setbacks and like Nehemiah even great opposition from within and without. I wish I could say that I was able to handle it all with the resolute faithfulness of Nehemiah, but I often have felt the need for his fortitude. What can Nehemiah teach us about not leaving the wall? Keeping on task and maintaining our purpose can be one of the most important traits of a successful leader.



1. What is the most satisfying project you have ever worked on?
2. What obstacles did you overcome to complete the task?



## Nehemiah 6; 7:1-3

1. Who were Sanballat and the rest of his cohorts that conspired against Nehemiah and why were they trying to trip him up?
2. What does Nehemiah suspect they are trying to do?
3. What impact was their unsealed letter intended to have on Nehemiah, the people at large, and the king of Persia?
4. How did Nehemiah demonstrate great resilience from their efforts to distract and interrupt his progress? What did it mean for him to stay on the wall?
5. How does Tobiah go even further to try to interrupt Nehemiah's efforts? Why did Nehemiah consider it a sin to enter the temple with Tobiah?
6. What are some of the internal and external obstacles you have faced to launch a ministry on campus?
7. How has God helped you maintain your outreach goal amidst these challenges?

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

James 1:2-4



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
  2. What obstacles of faith are you experiencing right now?
  3. Who do you need to encourage to keep on keeping on?
- 



## Back Story

The walls of Jerusalem, once in ruins for a century and a half, were rapidly nearing completion under Nehemiah's leadership, accomplished in just two months. However, amidst this remarkable progress, Nehemiah faced relentless opposition from adversaries determined to derail his mission. Despite facing death threats and attempts at spiritual manipulation, Nehemiah remained steadfast in his resolve to fulfill God's command to rebuild the city's defenses.

The strength of Nehemiah's leadership shines brightly in the face of adversity. His adversaries, including Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, were regional governors with vested interests in maintaining Jerusalem's ruins. These individuals, descendants of ancient foes of Israel, sought to hinder Nehemiah's efforts and keep the city vulnerable.

Chapter 6 of Nehemiah presents a heroic portrayal of his leadership. When confronted with attempts to distract him from his task, Nehemiah demonstrated unwavering focus and determination. Refusing to yield to the schemes of his adversaries, he recognized the importance of staying committed to the work at hand, ultimately preserving not only his own life but also the progress of the entire project.

One particularly insidious attempt by Tobiah involved exploiting his supposed Jewish heritage and connections within the priesthood to gain access to the temple. Nehemiah, upon learning of this sacrilege, took decisive action upon his return from serving in Persia. He expelled Tobiah's belongings from the temple storerooms, restoring the sanctity of the sacred space and reaffirming the temple's intended purpose.

Nehemiah's leadership exemplifies resilience, unwavering faith, and devoted commitment to God's will. Despite facing opposition from both external enemies and internal corruption, he remained steadfast in his devotion to the task entrusted to him. These qualities mark Nehemiah as a true and gifted leader, serving as a timeless example for those in positions of authority, including campus leadership, to emulate.

In essence, Nehemiah's story serves as a testament to the power of resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity - a reminder that staying steadfast on the wall for God's purpose is the only path to success.

# Spiritual Focus

Samson Sembega, MDiv, Pastor and Campus Minister,  
University of Tulsa, Oklahoma

Playing outside every day, he wanted to be the best basketball player. He would work as hard as he could, as often as he could. One day after coming home from a basketball game, he was embarrassed. After scoring zero points in the basketball game, he did not know if the career he had mapped out would work out. That is, until he heard his dad say these words: "Son, I love you whether you score zero points or sixty." That kid went on to be known as one of the best basketball players to ever play the game, Kobe Bryant. Words have a way of inspiring us and leading us in ways we have no idea. Words have a way of bringing the best out of us. If a father's encouraging words could inspire one of basketball's greatest, how much more powerful are the very words of the Almighty God?

In Nehemiah eight through ten, we see the people opening up the word of God in a way that had not been done in a very long time. But something that stands out more than anything else is the reverence and respect that they had for the word that was being shared. Kobe could have allowed those words of his father to go in one ear and out the other, but he respected his father enough to allow his word to settle into his heart. The people of God were being led by Ezra not only to hear the words spoken by God, but to prepare their hearts to receive it. We'll see how their attentiveness and receptivity to God's Word led them to deeper joy, obedience, and commitment.



1. What is a time when someone's words had the most impact in your life?
2. How did those words influence you?



## Nehemiah 8-10

1. How did the people respond when Ezra opened the word of God? (Nehemiah 8:5-6)
2. What did the people do when they could not understand what they were hearing from God's word? (Nehemiah 8:7-8)
3. What did reading the word of God cause the people to do? (Nehemiah 9:1-3)
4. Once the people heard the word of God and confessed their sins, what were they now prepared to do as a result? (Nehemiah 10:28-29)
5. What are ways we can learn to approach God's word from reading Nehemiah 8-10?
6. What can Nehemiah's dependence on God's word teach us about being a spiritual leader?
7. Which Bible verse, if you were to focus on each day, would completely change your life and world view?

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

John 17:17



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What is an unexpected blessing that popped up recently? (Doesn't matter how small or big.)
3. Who is someone you can share your lessons and blessings with?



## Back Story

The events of Nehemiah 8-10 take place after the immense feat of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. With the walls restored, the people gather and request that Ezra the scribe bring out the Book of the Law of Moses (Nehemiah 8:1). This signals a profound hunger to once again align their lives with God's word after years of neglect.

As Ezra reads from dawn until noon, the people respond with great reverence, standing up when the scrolls are opened (Nehemiah 8:5). The Levites then help explain and translate the readings so everyone can understand (Nehemiah 8:7-8). This careful transmission highlights the incredible value placed on comprehending Scripture accurately.

What follows is a powerful movement of national confession and repentance (Nehemiah 9:1-3). Hearing God's Law convicts them of their disobedience and moves them to contrition. This paves the way for their renewed commitment in Nehemiah 10:28-29 to walk faithfully according to the Lord's commands.

This public rediscovery of the Torah transformed their community from the inside out. Having rebuilt the physical walls, they were now allowing God's Word to rebuild the spiritual walls around their nation. Their reverence, desire for understanding, honesty in confession, and pledge of obedience models a proper posture before Scripture that still resonates today.

As we explore this passage, may we too embrace God's Word with utmost respect, seek to study it diligently, and allow it to shape our lives in obedience and devotion to the Lord.

# Giving Credit

Ron Pickell, DMin, Public Campus Ministry Director  
for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists  
and pastor of LIFE Church, UC Berkeley

Every year, my wife and I make it a point to tune in to the Academy Awards, if only to catch a glimpse of the glamor and grandeur of Hollywood. Yet, amidst the glitz, it's the acceptance speeches of the Oscar winners that truly captivate me. These speeches, often meticulously prepared or memorized, serve as tributes to the multitude of people who have contributed to their success. From heartfelt gratitude to parents, spouses, children and even God these speeches are a testament to the collaborative effort behind each achievement. However, time constraints often leave winners scrambling to express their gratitude before the orchestra cues them to wrap up their remarks. This challenge is particularly daunting in categories like Best Picture, where entire casts and crews share in the victory.

In Nehemiah 12 we encounter what can be likened to Nehemiah's own appreciation speech. While it may read like the scrolling credits of a movie, it offers valuable insights into the importance of shared leadership and acknowledging the contributions of others. Like the names listed in movie credits, each individual mentioned in Nehemiah's speech provides a glimpse into his character and the collaborative effort that led to his success. Let's see what he can teach us about sharing leadership and giving credit where credit is due.



1. Who do you have to thank for going to college?
2. When has someone included you along with their success?



## Nehemiah 12

1. Why does Nehemiah list the divisions of priests returning from the Babylonian exile in v. 1-11? What purpose might this dated list serve?
2. In verses 12-21 Nehemiah updates the list to include his contemporaries. What do these lists have in common? What do the lists tell us about God's faithfulness?
3. What impact would sharing this list have on the Jews about to dedicate the rebuilt walls?
4. How did the people celebrate the dedication of the walls?
5. Review Nehemiah's walk around the broken down walls of chapter 2. How does his lonely walk compare with the grand procession of chapter 12?
6. What spiritual improvements can you celebrate in your life?
7. What ACF Chapter developments are you most grateful for this year?

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

Hebrews 12:1, 2



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?
  2. Who are you collaborating with this week?
  3. What can you thank God about your ACF Chapter this week?
- 



## Back Story

Teamwork can be both a blessing and a challenge. In campus ministry sometimes the biggest challenge is just finding and recruiting volunteers. Still, it's important to remember how Nehemiah became involved in the first place by having his own eyes opened to the need of repairing the Jerusalem walls. It all started with his own disappointment on the slow rebuilding progress which led him to prayer and a refurbishing strategy. But in the end, he could not have accomplished the goal of building up the walls without a massive team of volunteers.

Perhaps one of the most important things we can say about Nehemiah is that he was a skilled community organizer. He pulled people together for the common goal and would not let anything or anyone keep him from achieving his task. Repairing the walls in 52 days under the difficult and stressful conditions he was operating in was a huge accomplishment.

Such great success is enough to mark Nehemiah as a great leader. But great leaders are not just known for getting the job done. It's also about how they do the job and who they recruit for the effort. This is where Nehemiah literally shines. He gives space in one whole chapter to those who helped accomplish the goal.

The focus here is on the priests which gave legitimacy to lineage and Jewish purity. The three main tribes which keep being repeated are Judah, Benjamin, and the Levites. The priest's main role was praise and worship. The celebration began on top of the completed wall with the celebrants divided into two groups marching toward each other and meeting at the temple. The ceremony resembled the dedication of Solomon's temple obviously meant to signify the importance of reestablishing the city and the temple following its destruction during the Babylonian captivity.

It was a grand procession. There was joy and rejoicing for all! The story of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem is a tribute to what the people of God can do when they work together to advance His kingdom. It also serves as a great example of what dedicated students can do in rebuilding spiritual edifices on campus when they work together.

Campus ministry is a collaborative effort. There is a place for every student from ACF president, student signatories, and everyone in the fellowship. Success demands the investment of every student in the chapter to become a welcoming community that embraces those that the Holy Spirit is leading to God. Good leaders know they cannot do this alone. It will take everyone working together for the success of the fellowship. Great campus leaders like Nehemiah not only know it, they give credit to everyone down to the one who at least shows up to support the chapter in whatever way possible!

# Heart

Lindsay M. Syeh, LMHC, MFT, NCC, Mdiv,  
Southeastern Conference Director of Young Adults,  
Campus Ministries, and National Service Organization

Growing up, I traveled many summers to Philadelphia to spend summer breaks with my grandparents. I loved going to their home because it was filled with love, endless stories, and treasured artifacts that brought life, beauty, and meaning to their home.

I enjoyed hanging out in my grandfather's workshop because on his day off we would work on side projects around the house together. One year we worked on restoring a cuckoo clock that was given to them by one of their neighbors. At first glance the condition was really bad. The auto swing pendulum was hanging on by its last strand, the chimes were displaced, and the chimer where the coo coo popped out was completely missing.

It was obvious that some parts needed to be replaced entirely, while others required delicate repairs. My grandfather painstakingly put his heart into this project; he cleaned, polished, and refinished every surface, crevice, and crack, ensuring that no detail was overlooked.

After a few weeks of meticulous work, the restoration was complete.



1. What has been the most difficult reform you have faced in your life?
2. What do you want God to remember you for?



## Nehemiah 13

1. How does Nehemiah's response to compromise within the community reflect his dedication to upholding the sanctity of the temple? What can we learn from his swift and decisive actions?
2. Nehemiah's restoration efforts involve confronting individuals and practices that threaten the spiritual well-being of the community. What are some modern-day equivalents of compromising influences or behaviors that we may need to address in our own lives or communities?
3. Nehemiah's actions demonstrate a deep reverence for God's Word and a commitment to obedience. How can we cultivate a similar reverence for Scripture and a willingness to obey God's commands in our daily lives?
4. Reflecting on Nehemiah's plea for God's favor and mercy, how can we pray for God's guidance and intervention in areas of compromise or spiritual decline?
5. Nehemiah's restoration efforts require both individual initiative and collective action. How can we balance personal responsibility with the need for communal accountability in addressing spiritual compromise and renewal?
6. What practical steps can we take to recognize and address compromise in our lives and communities, ensuring that we remain faithful to God's commands and principles?
7. How can Nehemiah's example inspire us to take bold action in confronting spiritual compromise and pursuing genuine renewal in our lives and communities today?

"My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God."

Psalm 84:2



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?
2. What has Nehemiah taught you about being a spiritual leader?
3. What reforms do you need to make to be a devoted leader like Nehemiah?



## Back Story

The restoration process of the cuckoo clock mirrors the journey of spiritual renewal and restoration found throughout the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 13 recounts the process of revival as he labored to restore the spiritual vitality of Jerusalem, breathing new life into its sacred spaces and practices. Through Nehemiah's work, we witness his unwavering commitment to serving God and his determination to maintain the integrity of worship and community life.

There are several lessons that we can learn from Nehemiah's leadership:

### **Recognizing and Addressing Compromise**

In our text, we observe how Nehemiah begins to address the leaders wavering in their faith. He discovers that Eliashib, the priest, had allowed Tobiah, an adversary of God's people, to reside in the house of God. This compromised the holiness of the temple. Nehemiah's response is swift and decisive; he purges the temple of Tobiah's influence and restores it to its proper use.

As we navigate the different realities of college life, we are often faced with temptations to compromise our faith or values. Nehemiah's example reminds us of what it looks like to stand firm in our faith and how to address peers who waver in theirs.

### **Ensuring Faithful Stewardship**

Nehemiah also addresses issues of misuse of tithes/community resources and the Sabbath observance. He addresses the Levites who are leaders within the temple and their inconsistencies in honoring and remembering the Sabbath and how resources are used within their community. Nehemiah reinstates proper distribution of resources and ensures believers are worshipping God on the Sabbath.

In our lives, it's easy to neglect our responsibilities or blur the boundaries of what is sacred and holy. Nehemiah's commitment to faithful stewardship challenges us to honor God with our time, resources, and commitments. Remaining true to spiritual disciplines and practices is one of the ways we live out what God is working within us. The heart lives what the heart loves. This is what it means to be leaders of heart!

# What are the defining qualities of a spiritual leader?

For many, leadership is about power and influence. Few leaders are willing to be used by God and do not hesitate to use others. We are starved for what Cheryl Patton in *What Made Nehemiah an Effective Leader* describes as *transformational leaders*.

What can Nehemiah teach us about transformational leadership on campus? Nehemiah led from the ruins amidst broken down walls and continuing attack from inside and outside forces. Building spiritual communities on secular campuses is not unlike rebuilding walls that have been rammed and broken down. Developing people and groups that honor God and bless others in places of academic stress and competition is no easy task. It will demand the initiative, dedication, strategic planning, commitment, and most of all the heart of Nehemiah.



*Leading From the Wall*  
Participant's Guide  
available at  
[AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org).