



# LEADING FROM THE WALL

Ron Pickell

*Leading From the Wall - Participant'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 followers, 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!

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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.

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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

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2. Share an issue that you prayed about that ended up with you being the answer to your own prayer

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## Nehemiah 1

1. What do we know about Nehemiah?

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2. Nehemiah means: "Consoling breath/spirit of the Lord." How did Nehemiah live up to this name?

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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?

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4. Read the prayer again (5-11). Identify its sections. What can we learn about God, Nehemiah, and Israel?

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5. What role do you think that turning first to God played in Nehemiah's approach to the king?

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6. What impact do you think Nehemiah's spiritual life and practice played in being chosen as the king's personal servant?

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7. What burdens or concerns do you have about your campus? How does Nehemiah's story inspire you to prayer and action?

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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!

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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



# 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?

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2. What is one thing you are really good at observing, when other people might miss it?

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## 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?

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2. What was the relationship of a cupbearer to a king in Nehemiah's time?

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3. Why might Nehemiah have been afraid when the king noticed his sadness?

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4. How does Nehemiah describe what he's going through?

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5. Look ahead in the text. What was the end result of Nehemiah's vulnerability with the king?

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6. What might have happened instead, had Nehemiah been too proud to express his pain to someone else?

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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?

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

James 4:10

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1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?

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2. Can you remember a time when you were vulnerable with someone and it resulted in something positive?

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3. How might skillfully sharing your emotions demonstrate humility and free others up to live more authentically themselves?

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# 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?

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2. What keeps you from stepping up when you know you should?

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## 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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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7. How can this group pray for you today?

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8. How is learning to love others living "the" good life?

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"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?

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# 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."

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1. Have you ever noticed a discouraging problem in your community and felt called to fix it?

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2. How easy or hard has it been to build your community on your campus?

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### Nehemiah 2:10-20

1. Why do you think Nehemiah went to see the city alone and without telling the local leaders?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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5. What do you think contributed to Nehemiah's confidence in dismissing his critics?

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6. While doing God's work, what contributes to your confidence when confronting obstacles?

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"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



# 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?

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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?

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## 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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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"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

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?

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1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

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2. What areas do you need to persevere in right now?

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3. Who can you encourage to keep keeping on?

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# 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.

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2. Do you find it difficult or easy to adjust to a new set of circumstances? Describe.

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### Nehemiah 4:16-23

1. What kind of pressure do you think Nehemiah was feeling on top of the wall?

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2. Nehemiah was facing opposition from without and fear from within his own ranks. Which do you think was more difficult to deal with?

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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?

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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?

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5. Nehemiah had to make some split-second decisions. What quick decisions have you most recently had to make? How did it work out?

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6. What are some ways your chapter needs to adapt to better accomplish your mission?

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"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



1. How has God been using *Journey* in your life this week on campus?

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2. What are some ways you need to adapt to better serve others?

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3. How is God using plan B in your life right now?

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# 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 injustice.



1. Describe a time when someone took advantage of you.

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2. When have you ever stood up for someone who was being exploited?

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## Nehemiah 5:1-13

1. Why do you think the lower class Jews felt compelled to borrow money to pay their taxes?

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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?

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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?

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4. What does Nehemiah's response reveal about his character and leadership qualities in terms of caring for the welfare of others?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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

Amos 5:24



1. How has God been using Journey in your life this week on campus?

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2. What issues of injustice is your campus dealing with right now that you could weigh in on?

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3. What leadership role is God prompting you to take to help make a difference?

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# 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 non-profits 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?

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2. Who has been an example of a generous spirit in your life?

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### 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)

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2. Reflect on a time when you had the opportunity to take more than you needed but chose not to. What motivated your decision?

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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)

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4. In what ways can you demonstrate similar generosity and selflessness in your daily life, especially within your ACF community?

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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)

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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?

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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)

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8. How can the principles of fairness and generosity guide your interactions with peers and faculty at your university?

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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)

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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)

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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?

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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?

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“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?

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2. What examples of great leadership have you encountered this week?

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3. What ways is God calling you to give back to the ACF Chapter this semester (or next)?

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# 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 Psychol-  
ogy, 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?

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2. What obstacles did you overcome to complete the task?

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### 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?

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2. What does Nehemiah suspect they are trying to do?

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3. What impact was their unsealed letter intended to have on Nehemiah, the people at large, and the king of Persia?

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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?

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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?

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6. What are some of the internal and external obstacles you have faced to launch a ministry on campus?

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7. How has God helped you maintain your outreach goal amidst these challenges?

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"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?

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2. What obstacles of faith are you experiencing right now?

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# 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?

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2. How did those words influence you?

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## Nehemiah 8-10

1. How did the people respond when Ezra opened the word of God? (Nehemiah 8:5-6)

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2. What did the people do when they could not understand what they were hearing from God's word? (Nehemiah 8:7-8)

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3. What did reading the word of God cause the people to do? (Nehemiah 9:1-3)

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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)

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5. What are ways we can learn to approach God's word from reading Nehemiah 8-10?

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6. What can Nehemiah's dependence on God's word teach us about being a spiritual leader?

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7. Which Bible verse, if you were to focus on each day, would completely change your life and world view?

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"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?

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2. What is an unexpected blessing that popped up recently? (Doesn't matter how small or big.)

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# 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?

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2. When has someone included you along with their success?

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## 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?

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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?

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3. What impact would sharing this list have on the Jews about to dedicate the rebuilt walls?

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4. How did the people celebrate the dedication of the walls?

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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?

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6. What spiritual improvements can you celebrate in your life?

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7. What ACF Chapter developments are you most grateful for this year?

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"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?

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2. Who are you collaborating with this week?

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# 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?

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2. What do you want God to remember you for?

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## 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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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?

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"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?

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# 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.

  
Seventh-day  
Adventist Church  
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