



Discussion Questions **LEADER GUIDE**

Week of 4/21/24

Text: Nehemiah 2

Icebreaker: When have you felt like you were taking a great risk? How did it turn out?

1. Read Nehemiah 2. What was significant to you from these verses or from the sermon you heard this week? Why?

2. This chapter begins about 4 months after the start of chapter 1. According to these chapters, what was Nehemiah doing during these months to prepare for this moment?

Chislev (1:1) is mid-Nov to mid-Dec on our calendars and Nisan (2:1) is around April. Chapter 1 presents Nehemiah as engaged in fasting and prayer as he awaits an opportunity to speak with the king.

Application: How have fasting and prayer helped prepare you for difficult situations you've faced? Or, if you haven't had an experience like this, what can you learn from Nehemiah's example?

It's common for people to have experience with prayer but not as much with fasting. Be sure to celebrate how people in your group have engaged in prayer even if they don't have as much experience with fasting.

3. How would you describe Nehemiah's interaction with King Artaxerxes in verses 1-8? From Nehemiah's perspective, why did the king respond favorably?

Here are a few possible responses: Nehemiah is courageous, he's bold, he's sensitive, he's respectful, he's prepared.

Application: Where in your life have you seen "the hand of [your] God...upon you" in a challenging situation?

4. Verses 9-20 describe the opposition Nehemiah faces. What does Nehemiah do in the face of this opposition?

Nehemiah's decision to inspect Jerusalem at night is likely in response to the opposition. It was wise of him—and likely more effective—to try to avoid making matters worse by going in the dark to see the situation first-hand. Also, in verse 20 we hear Nehemiah express a bold confidence in God's help.

Application: What can we learn from Nehemiah's response to those who oppose him?

5. Verse 18 says that the people "strengthened their hands for the good work" following Nehemiah's call to action. Why do you think they responded favorably in this moment?

It's certainly possible that Nehemiah was a charismatic figure who people naturally wanted to listen to and follow (which itself is a gift from God). More directly, though, we can't miss the connection between Nehemiah's months of fasting and prayer in chapter 1 that included asking for God's favor not only on himself, but also on others ("servants"). In other words, we should see Nehemiah's prayer as effective for shaping the heart of Artaxerxes and those who would need to respond to the task at hand.

Application: We might say that Nehemiah "prayed these people into action." What are you praying for that only God can accomplish in other people's lives?