

REVIVE

...A SECOND WIND

Small Group Leader Guide

Nehemiah 7:1-8:18 | A Spiritual Second Wind

Prepare: Things to do before your small group gets together

- When you think of someone who has been a great Bible teacher to you, who comes to mind? Maybe it is your current pastor, or a mentor, or someone who invested in you. Perhaps it is a Bible teacher with a large platform (such as a radio/TV/Internet ministry). What is it about that person that makes them a great Bible teacher? Is it because they are charismatic or convincing? Or is it because they challenge you with biblical truth and inspire you to apply God's word to your life? How has that person encouraged or inspired you? How has God used that person's teaching to develop your relationship with Jesus? **Thank** God in prayer for using this person to grow your faith and bring meaning to your walk.
- **Review Nehemiah 7:1-8:12** to review the content of the biblical focus. **Invite** God to speak to you with a fresh application of His timeless truth. **Ask** God to give you wisdom in teaching His message of grace and restoration to your small group. **Submit your heart** to God's conviction, that you may be exhorted to experience anew the timely activity of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
- **Preview** this material and engage with God's Spirit as He guides your study.
- **Pray** for your small group members by name, asking God to use you to be a teacher of influence for each person in your group, for the glory and cause of Jesus. **Seek God's wisdom** in leading your small group to apply God's word to their lives. **Commit yourself to the Lord**, that you would live what you teach.

To The Point – What to impart to your small group

Key Verse: And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." . (Nehemiah 8:9-10, ESV)

Objectives: Through your time exploring this passage, your small group members will:

Discuss the steps Nehemiah implemented to preserve the peace and lead Jerusalem into their "second wind."

Discuss the opportunities God has given you for your next season of life.

Apply the biblical principles discovered into your life for getting your second wind.

Encounter: A suggested plan for your small group experience

Conversation Starter: What "refuels" you?

Ask When you are undertaking a big project, or something challenges you to persevere, what "refuels" you? What do you do when you find yourself running out of steam (emotional, mental, physical, spiritual), and how do you "charge back up?"

Allow Groups to respond.

Say We are going to look at 2 chapters - Nehemiah 7 and 8 - and in this, we're going to see how Israel got their second wind, and strive to apply the principles of what they did to each of our own lives so that we might have a renewed sense of purpose, provision, and power in what is set before us.

Open in prayer for your time together.

Organizing for the Second Wind (Nehemiah 7:1-3)

The work of building the wall has been extensive, under continual opposition from both internal and external forces, and required great sacrifice by everyone involved. Now that the wall is finished, it would be tempting to stop and take a rest. What evidence do you see here that Nehemiah didn't do this?

Nehemiah recognized that great victories can set the stage for great failures or great defeats if attention isn't given to "what comes next." He wisely realized that opposition doesn't cease simply because a project arrives at completion. So, after the work was completed, he placed people in strategic positions to preserve and protect the great things that had been accomplished in building the wall. He also gave explicit instructions on the procedures to be followed to ensure the safety.

Let's look more closely at the actions implemented by Nehemiah. What "strategy" do you see in who Nehemiah appointed and placed, and what purposes are accomplished in his strategy?

Nehemiah placed the singers and the Levites in the strategic place of protecting the gates. This is because these specialized personnel are typically responsible for guarding the temple. He wisely placed the right people in the places where the work was critical to be conducted at the highest level. Furthermore, it illustrates the spiritual nature of the work of guarding Jerusalem. These were not mere "muscle" men that he put at the post, but spiritually-minded men who saw the greater significance to protecting the gates. Next, he put people of integrity in important positions of responsibility. This illustrates the need to delegate well. Then, he instituted wise limitations on the accessibility into the city through the gates. Nehemiah understood the cultures both within and beyond the walls of the city, and his decree to keep the door shut at the times of Jerusalem's weakest hours showed that he knew the risks and the vulnerabilities of his city. Finally, he repeated the instruction that the guards would protect the wall in the vicinity of their own homes, which greatly motivated them to remain vigilant because they could see the value in what they were protecting, as well as made it easier for them to live by being near where they performed their guarding responsibilities.

Where in your own life do you see organization as a preparatory step toward living in faith?

Allow participants to respond. Important themes to highlight may include:

- *God is a God of order. He operates in ways that, while often surprising, are never disorderly or confusion-inducing to His children.*
- *God honors humble preparation undertaken for His glory.*

- Preparation is the initial execution of the wisdom that He dispenses for the accomplishment of His purposes.
- Preparation can be a faith-initiated activity that endeavors to rightly use the resources (physical, spiritual, human, etc.) God provides.

Accounting the Opportunity (Nehemiah 7:4-73)

While this extended passage includes many names and numbers, let's focus on verses 4-6. What stands out to you in this passage?

Allow participants to respond. Important points to highlight include:

- God had provided spacious, safe accommodations for Israel, but it was underpopulated.
- Because life inside the walls was not yet ready to accommodate the full population of Israel, Nehemiah wanted the entire population to distribute the sacrifice evenly, just as they had in building the walls.
- Note that God put this into his heart. This was not a man-made plan or a scheme that just made practical sense. It was a necessity to continue the plan that God had initiated in leading Nehemiah there in the first place.
- Nehemiah found the census as a result of what God had initiated. This list that follows is nearly identical to Ezra 2:1-70.

Read verses 66-73. Why can it be valuable to take inventory of your resources at appropriate times?

There are several good, godly reasons to take inventory:

- It allows you to conscientiously acknowledge God's provision.
- It facilitates an attitude of thanksgiving toward God.
- It provides you the ability to be strategic about your planning.
- It informs you of your strengths and weaknesses, which you can accordingly take before God.
- In leading others, it affords you the means to inform, instruct, include, and inspire others.

Take a moment and consider the plans that God has put on your heart, or on the heart of your small group. What is he leading you to accomplish? What resources has he provided for you to accomplish this?

Allow the group to respond. This is an excellent opportunity for your group to take some time to discuss serving together in a local ministry, or to provide a neighborhood outreach. Recognize that God has brought you together not only for Bible study and development of your small group community, but to be His hands, feet, and voice to the world around you. Be responsive to God's Holy Spirit as He leads the response to the conversation. If God is leading you to minister, do not let the moment pass...take steps to organize and proceed by faith. Explore the opportunity. Seek the chance to serve Him with your group!

Second Wind (Nehemiah 8:1-12)

In reading chapter 8, the phrase "the people" is repeated 13 times. God has brought them from their surrounding communities to be gathered in the square. What do you think is significant about this?

It illustrates that to God, people matter most. This was not about Jerusalem as a city, nor about the wall as a protection for the city. The people always matter most to God - more than things or places. God was providing a home for His children, and He was providing safety for them. He brought "the people" together who had been dispersed. He brought them together to do a common work to accomplish a singular purpose. He gave them a common vision and compelled them to work together rather than individually or opposed to one another.

What do you see the role of Ezra to be here? What all do you see in terms of his part in the community of Israel, and the people's interaction with him and his contributions?

Ezra was clearly present as a representative of God. Preparations were made for his arrival, and the people were eagerly anticipating his time before them. He came and read from the Scriptures (most likely the Pentateuch), and read extensively from it (six hours!). The people received him and his message with gladness. They stood in reverence as he read the Scriptures.

Verses 6-8 indicate important elements of the community's spiritual activity. What stands out to you?

Allow the group to respond. Highlight the following, as you are able:

- *The entire community "answered, Amen." There was real unity and spiritual agreement that took place.*
- *They all bowed down and worshiped God. We see that real worship occurs where God's people humble themselves before God and recognize that He is the recipient of their worship, and that they themselves are not the audience making criticism of the leaders of the worship.*
- *The Levites provided teaching and explanation of the law while the people were standing there! The large group gathered under the teaching of Ezra, but they had a prototypical "small group experience!"*
- *It was important for the people to understand the Word of God. God designed people to be in relationship with Him. He wants us to understand the law that He gave for our good, and to understand His truth that He has shared with us.*

Verses 9-12 give a culminating context to the gathering. How do you see chapters 7 and 8 fitting together under the context given in these verses?

God led Nehemiah to undertake the work in rebuilding the wall for the benefit of His children, Israel. Once the work of the wall was completed, it was necessary to gather the children. Now, His children were gathered, and spending time with Him in this time of worship. The people heard a singularly resounding message from their civic leader Nehemiah, their spiritual authority Ezra, as well as the spiritual leaders the Levites; namely, that this day - this time of regathering before the Lord - was sacred. It was holy. It was special. It was important to frame the context from God's perspective because it is so easy for people to lose perspective.

Why do you suppose the exhortation is given for them, "do not grieve," and to go enjoy the experiences of the day?

There are several reasons why these instructions were the culmination of the day:

- *In declaring the day to be holy, it was a day that was made holy by God.*
- *When God gathered His children and they spent extended time in His presence, their understanding of God, of themselves, of their relationship, and of their circumstances was all enlightened. They had new perspective that encouraged and inspired them. A natural outflow of that was to celebrate. God wants us to rejoice in His goodness and provision.*
- *An expected part of expressing joy is sharing the blessings with others. It was an intentional element of their rejoicing and celebration to give to others.*

Celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles (Nehemiah 8:13-18)

While many people returned to their homes, the heads of the families and the spiritual leaders stayed to receive further instruction from Ezra. What is significant about this to you?

The family leaders were responsible for their entire families. They would be taking and applying that which they were learning and applying to the lives of the people under their care. They and the spiritual leaders were not satisfied with a day's religious experience. They wanted an experience that was transferable and that would extend beyond that particular day. We also see that applied theology is the responsibility of both the pastors/shepherds and the family leaders. It is not merely the work of the church leaders, but of family leaders as well.

They "found written in the Law" the commands to commemorate the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths, as the ESV translates), recorded in [Leviticus 23:33-43](#). This feast was to be celebrated with joy, in the place that God would show them (cf. [Deut. 16:15](#)). Why do you think it was significant to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the context of their recently being gathered for the first time within the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem?

It was important to remember the past when Israel had wandered in the desert and they persevered by faith in the promise of God's provision and deliverance. Now that they were again enjoying the blessing of God's provision and protection, it may become easy to forget or take for granted the great deeds God had accomplished. While the festival had been celebrated in the past, the emphasis on the "ingathering" of the harvest had evidently become more of the focus instead of the historical celebration. This current celebration occurred after the people had spent targeted time in God's word, and were reminded of His great grace shown to Israel, which reminded them of God's faithfulness in His covenant with His children.

Jesus in Focus

Note: This new feature will be an ongoing inclusion in the curriculum, to help bring Jesus into focus and help your small group live the Gospel and share Him in your day-to-day living.

Where in this chapter do you see Jesus: Christ-like practices, examples, principles?

Among the many acceptable answers:

- *We see that Jesus is our shield, our protector, our provider. He has promised that if we abide in Him we will bear much fruit.*
- *Jesus is the living Word of God. We are exhorted to know the Word. Life lived in the context of the Word is a life of abiding by faith in Jesus.*
- *Knowing Jesus is a matter of relating with God in an ongoing manner because Jesus is the sole mediator between God and man. Jesus makes it possible for us to live with joy in a continual manner, even when circumstances are not ideal.*
- *It is good to remember what Jesus has saved us from, but also to look forward to what Jesus has saved us for! We are living in "temporary tabernacles" right now, but there will be a day when God's children will be given incorruptible bodies that will be our heavenly tabernacles where we will dwell with Him forever!*

What are some other Scriptures that come to mind or are relevant to this chapter's themes, teachings, or emphases?

Among the many acceptable possibilities:

- [John 15:1-5](#)
- [John 21:15-17](#)
- [Hebrews 5:12-14](#)
- [1 Peter 2:2](#)

- James 1:22

What is one "take-away" for you from this chapter?

Allow the group participants to respond.

Say Your spiritual second win begins with coming into the presence of the Lord. There is strength in spiritual community. There is unity. There is blessing by being in the counsel of godly leaders who wisely and accurately share God's Word with you for you to take and apply to your life and the lives of the people you lead. Your second wind can begin at any moment, requiring only for you to worship God with joy.

Let's close in prayer:

Invite the group to pray for one another. **Pray** over any needs or issues that were shared in your time together. Pray over the content discussed in your small group, highlighting the aspects that God's Spirit revealed to your group as important. **Confirm your plans** for your next gathering!