



SEACOAST MISSIONS

LEAVE YOUR MARK

2015 MISSIONS DEVOTIONAL



DAY 1

Welcome to your missions adventure! God has already prepared great things for you over the next week or two. He has prepared people for you to minister to and to minister to you. He has appointed your team to walk this journey with you – even the ones that may prove to be “holy sandpaper” for you. Know that God has already been preparing you for this courageous step.

In training, we talked about how a balanced life is made up of loving God, loving others (building community), and being the change. This is an intense opportunity to partake in all three of these facets of life. You will have the opportunity to love God more by coming to know Him better and be being better able to listen without the distractions of our normal day-to-day life. We get to see what true community looks like by living in close quarters with our team for the next week or two. We’ll get to see the good, bad, and ugly of each person, and they’ll see ours! Finally, we get to be used by God to change the world through His power and direction. What an honor! You are part of His plan to love on His people and bring more into His Kingdom.

As we journey together, we are going to also journey together in scripture with our forefather, Nehemiah. We’ll get to experience some of what he lived thousands of years ago as we also journey to bring God’s hope.

PRAY

- For God to show you how much He loves you.
- For God to prepare your heart, soul, mind, and spirit for the adventure He has for you.
- For God to prepare the hearts of those on your team.
- For God to prepare the hearts of those to whom you will be ministering.

DAY 2

NEHEMIAH 1

When we first we meet Nehemiah, God is in the process of breaking his heart for what was breaking the heart of God. Many Jews had returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity to rebuild the city. Jerusalem was without walls and had nothing to protect it from further attack. Nehemiah's Jewish brothers were struggling to rebuild. They were living in a state of disarray and discouragement. The Jews may have been in their homeland, but they were far from home. When Nehemiah heard of the deplorable conditions of his ancestors' homeland, his heart immediately went out to those who had courageously returned while Nehemiah himself is still in exile living a "cushy" life as the king's cup bearer.

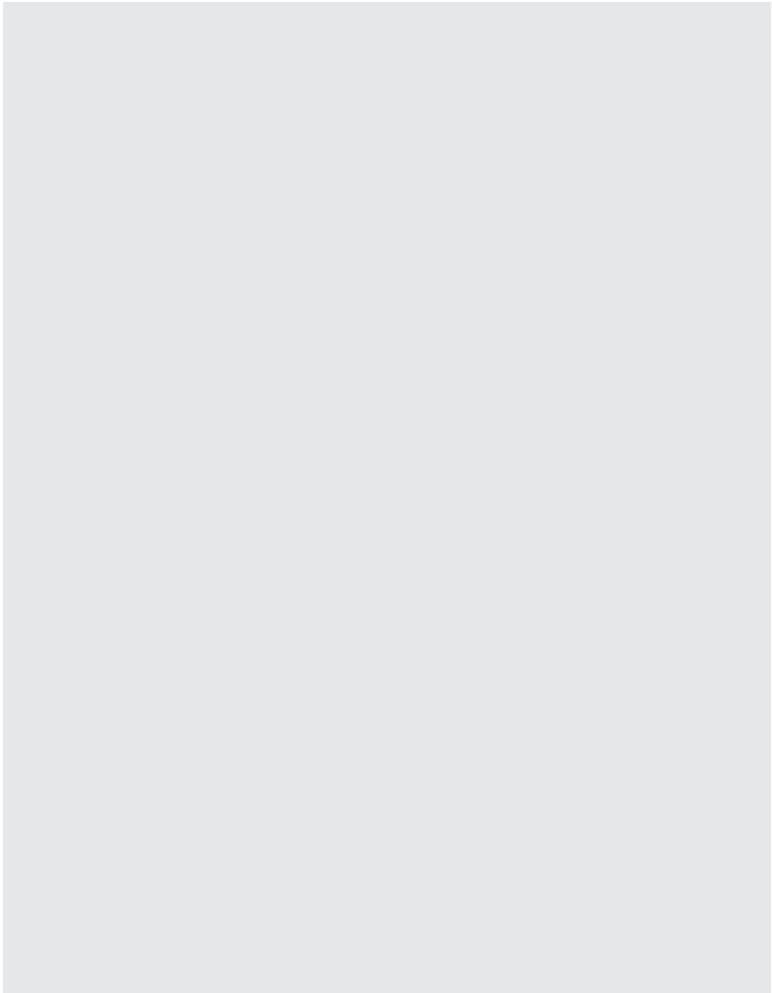
So, what does Nehemiah do when he hears of the plight of his people? He goes straight to God and asks for direction. First, he confesses the sins of God's people removing anything that might block him from hearing God's answer. Next, he claims the promises that the Lord has given to His people. And finally, he receives the commission (the charge) from God to move forward with his plan.

Have you allowed God to break your heart for those you will meet on this mission trip- from the airline check-in agent to the bus driver to those you'll meet in the villages/cities you'll be ministering in? We've been called out from our comfortable life in the US to serve (and serve alongside) those in other cultures. Do we love them as our Father loves them? Are we prepared for the ministry that HE has for us? Have we confessed and turned away from any sin that may hinder us from being used to bear great fruit for the Kingdom?

You have been commissioned by Jesus in the Great Commission and by Seacoast Church at training to go into all the world to share Christ and love others in His name. Claim this! Live it out!

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For God to break our heart for what breaks His and specifically for the people that He will place in our path.
- For forgiveness of anything that may hinder us from accomplishing His work.
- To receive the promises He has for us as a child of God.
- To receive the commissioning and authority that has been placed upon us.



DAY 3

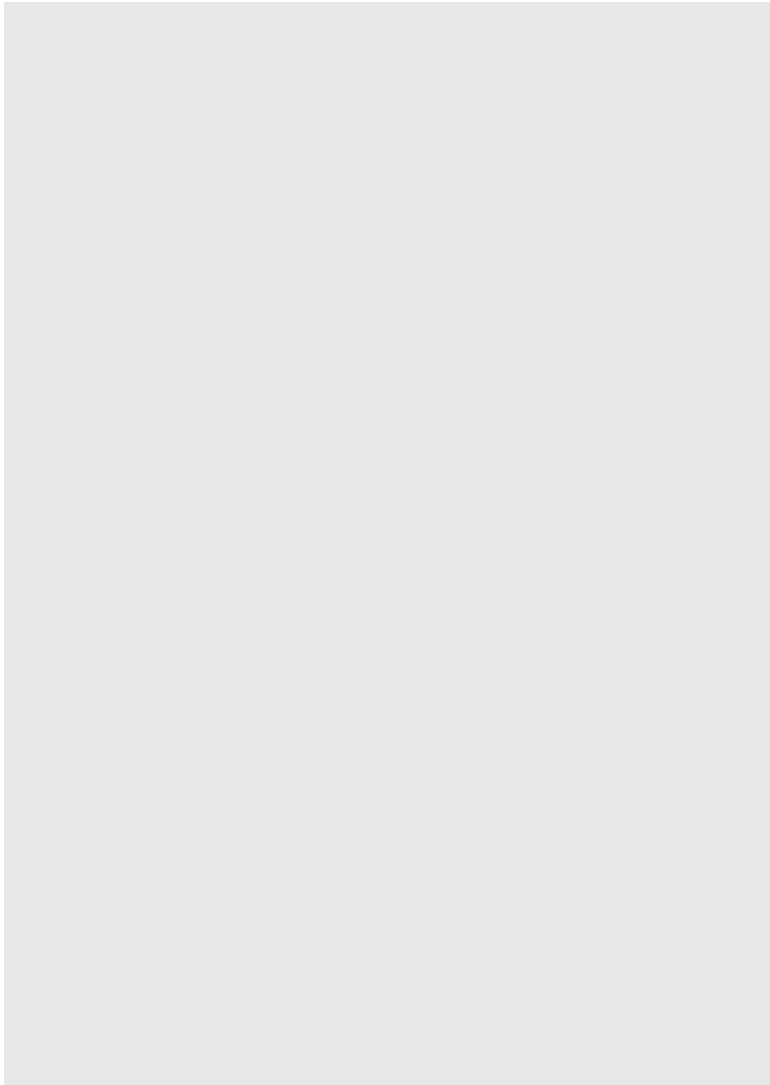
NEHEMIAH 2:1-10

When we pick up Nehemiah's story today, it is 4 months after he heard about the condition of Jerusalem and its people. Four months! What has this guy been doing? It appears as though he's been praying and preparing himself to move forward. Sometimes God's timing may be different from our own, but it's always right! Nehemiah prays for 4 months before going before his boss, King Artaxerxes to ask for permission to return to Judah to rebuild the city. He not only prayed before making the request, he also prayed through it. He knew that God had placed King Artaxerxes as his authority and that he needed to follow that authority. As he brought his request to his God-given authority, he continued to pray - as he asked permission, as he answers questions, as he made further requests. The Lord gave him both courage and the words to say. Because he knew his ultimate authority was sending him to Jerusalem (due to months of prayer), he also knew we could go respectfully before his earthly authority to move forward with the plan. And, of course, we see God honor his process and give him favor with the king.

Hopefully, you've been praying for the last 4-6-12 months as you've prepared for this trip. As you went to your earthly authority - be it a boss, a parent, or a professor - the Lord had already paved the way for you to journey on this adventure. Our adventure has begun, which means that we must continue to pray through it. We will continue to meet with earthly authority in our leaders, our mission partner, or even our flight attendants whom God has appointed for us. He is also giving us the opportunity to honor them and respect their decisions. Often this takes a lot of prayer as their answers may or may not match up with our desired outcome. But, as in Nehemiah's story, through prayer and following the authority God has established before us, we will see incredible movement forward in what God has planned for us.

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For God's will to be done through this adventure.
- For your earthly authority (boss, parent, political officials...)
- For the ability to honor and submit to those whom God has placed over you.



DAY 4

NEHEMIAH 2:11-20

Nehemiah has finally made it to Jerusalem. After months of prayer and courageously going before the King, he has traveled a long distance to the land of his ancestors and he sets directly to work. He knows the vision the Lord has placed in his heart and he needs to see with his own eyes his starting point. In inspecting the walls, the Lord could more firmly plant the vision in Nehemiah's heart. God knew that Nehemiah would need this as the project would take time and not be without opposition.

Having a vision is so important, but getting to a destination is extremely difficult if you don't know where you're starting! Do you recognize where are you starting? Take some time to ask the Lord where you are spiritually. What does he want to change in you on this trip? Talk with your leader and your host missionary to find out where your team is starting with the people to whom you're ministering. Are you the first team here? Are many of them already Christians? What are their greatest needs - food, water, education? Allow God to plant His vision in your heart based on what He shows you throughout the trip.

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For a better understanding of where you're starting this trip spiritually.
- For your heart to be humbled so that you can align your life to God's vision for this journey.
- For God's vision for your life/ministry to be planted firmly in your heart.

DAY 5

NEHEMIAH 3

How fun is it to try to pronounce all the names of old! But what is the purpose of all of these names and details? Well, for one thing, Nehemiah is a history book. If you remember your history classes, you remember they were filled with names and details. I believe God also inspired Nehemiah to include it to remind us that it takes time to fulfill the big plans that He has for us and each of us have our own role to play. At times, the area of the wall that a family took to rebuild was difficult or inconvenient, but it was definitely the one God had appointed for them during this mission.

And so it is with our mission teams. Every person on your team has a very specific role and God even has an important role for you! Are you willing to step up and do the hard work? It may not always be fun or easy or convenient, but it will always be important in fulfilling God's purpose for your team, for the people you're ministering to, and for you. How exciting that He has portioned out a specific role uniquely for you! Don't miss your chance during your trip to play your part and to serve as God as called you to serve.

TODAY LET'S PRAY:

- That you will understand your role on this team and on this mission.
- That you will seek with all your heart to fulfill your role.
- For your teammates to also do what God is specifically calling them to do on this adventure.

DAY 6

NEHEMIAH 4

And the true battle begins... Nehemiah experiences some epic opposition. In an attempt to stop the building of the wall, Sanballat and Tobiah try to convince the people that their work is shoddy and unimportant. And they hit at the most difficult time - when the team was getting tired!

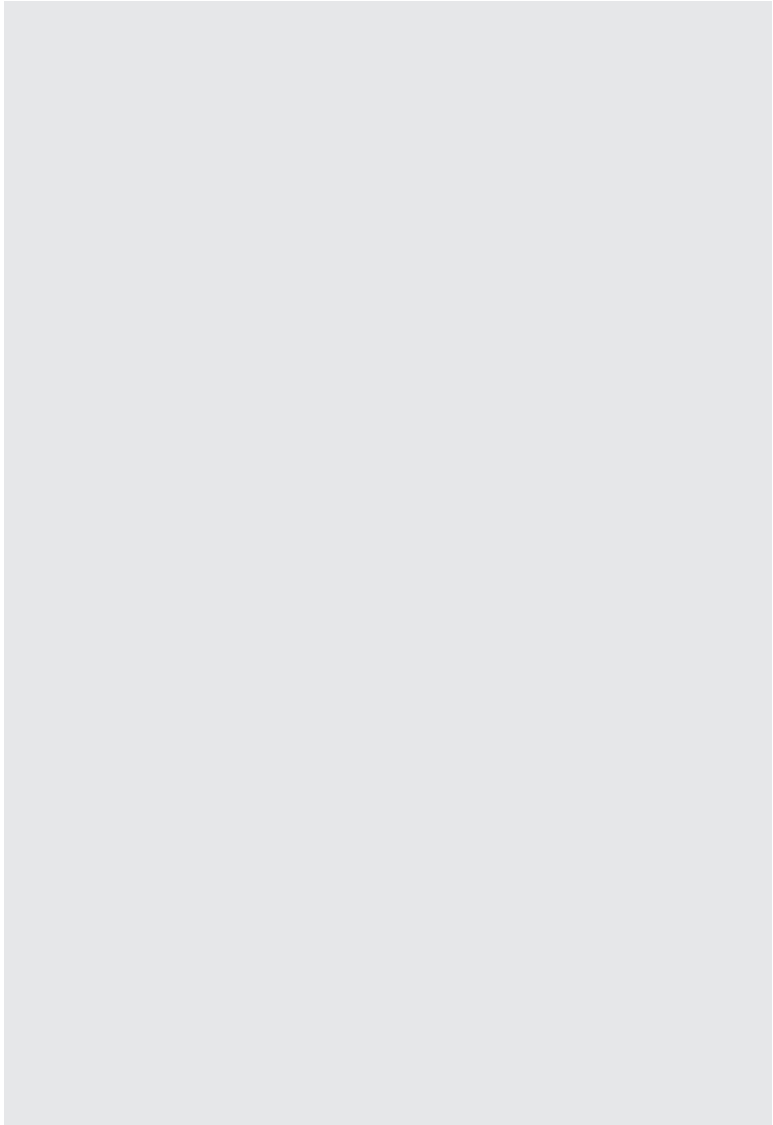
You may have already started experiencing some spiritual warfare before you came on this trip, but it's not over yet. Often Satan hits hardest in the middle of the trip when we start getting tired. It comes out as illness, homesickness, disunity among the team and more. Think about what you have seen over the last few days. Is Satan trying to tell you that what you're doing isn't important or won't make a difference? Is he saying that you're not worthy of being on this team or trip? Is he telling you the person you have to share a sleeping space with is not worthy of this trip? Satan will lie and do whatever it takes to reach his goal - which is to distract you from your goal!

Nehemiah chooses the best plan of action: he prays and then he unifies. Half of his team worked while the other half guarded them - had their backs. How have you seen Satan creep into your team through disunity? How can your team have each other's backs? How can you be part of the solution?

Nehemiah unified his people through the use of the trumpet. If there was problem anywhere, the trumpet would be blown and everyone would converge. What is your team's battle cry? Whether the trip is just starting or coming to the end, it's never too late to have a unifying battle cry!

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For spiritual eyes to see the full picture.
- For the full armor of God to cover you.
- For each of your team members and unity within your team.



DAY 7

NEHEMIAH 5

Chapter 5 seems to be taking a break from the story. Instead of being about building walls or coming against those who are trying to stop the completion, Nehemiah is pulled away from his “normal” work to set right the living conditions for the people who are serving alongside him.

As a team, we need to stay focused on the vision that the Lord has for our trip, but we also need to be flexible to take different routes to our end goal as the Lord leads. Often the Lord has a more interesting journey than we could imagine. He will give us opportunity to grow and change through plans not going as we expected and through problems (“opportunities”) arising within our team. This could come from the person you sat next to on the plane, a vehicle breaking down or disunity on the team.

What opportunities has the Lord already given your team to minister that were not as you expected? Remember, we have the opportunity to be part of the solution. There’s an old adage that says “Those who are flexible will never be bent out of shape.” This trip is a great opportunity to open our eyes to the many ways that God may want us to minister...and they are probably not what we expect!

TODAY LET’S PRAY

- For the Lord to open your eyes to see to whom He wants you to minister.
- For God to change your heart to fully rely on Him...even when things seem out of control.
- For the Lord to implant His larger vision of today in your heart.

DAY 8

NEHEMIAH 6:1-14

Because the work is ongoing, the Israelites are continuing to meet opposition. Since attempting to dis-unify and discourage the team didn't work last time, Sanballat and Tobiah go after Nehemiah the leader. "Strike the shepherd and the sheep with scatter." Nehemiah was wise and stood strong in the role the Lord had commissioned him for.

Being a leader is different in many ways from being a team member. Not only have they received the vision and commission for the team, they have also received the responsibility of caring for and encouraging those on their team. Being a team member brings its challenges, but being a team leader brings not only the leader's personal challenges but all those of the team as well.

Your leader has been chosen and commissioned to lead your team. They have not only prepared the logistics of the trip, they have also prepared you. They have walked through this incredible journey with you and helped you shoulder the rough patches. They have also been under incredible spiritual attack as they are working selflessly for the Lord. Have you been praying for them in this role of leadership? Have you been encouraging them? Have you been acknowledging their authority and choosing to believe the best of them as the Israelites did with Nehemiah? It's never too late to start!

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For wisdom, strength and energy for your leaders.
- For spiritual protection for your leaders.
- To find and act on ways to encourage and better follow your leaders.

DAY 9

NEHEMIAH 6:15-7:73

The wall around Jerusalem has been completed!! The vision has been recognized! Nehemiah's work is done, so now he can simply sit around and bask in his accomplishments. It's time for a vacation!

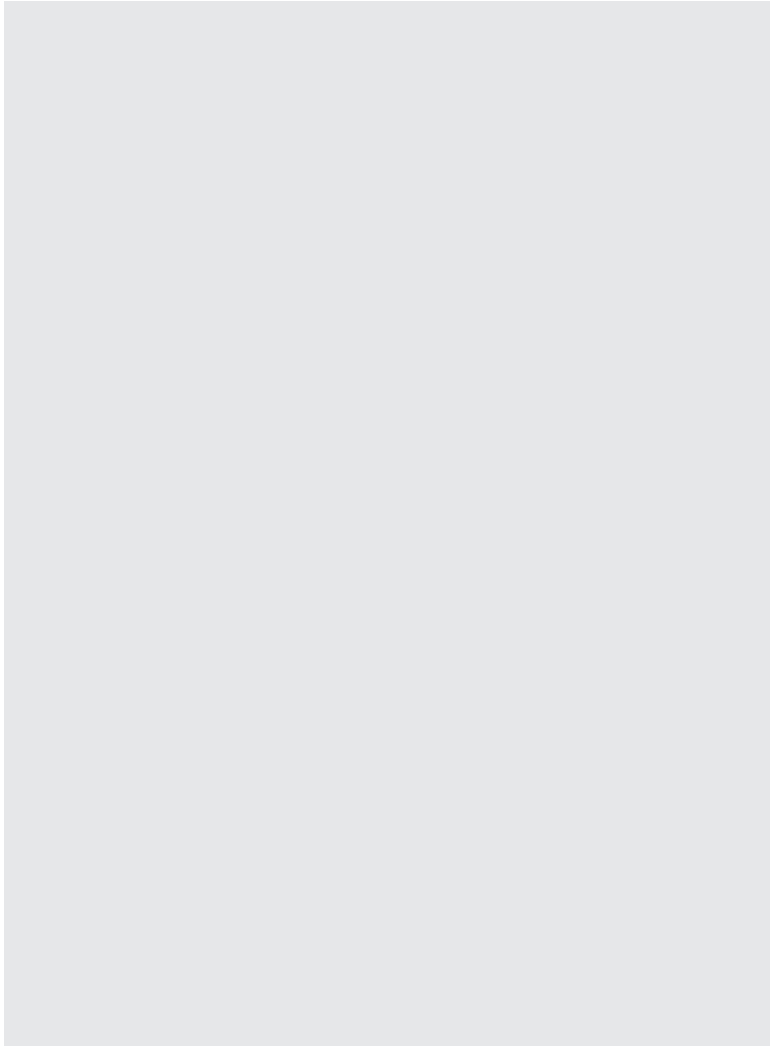
Okay...so that's not what happened. The wall WAS finished in record time and God was given glory for it. Finishing touches were added and then Nehemiah had to start preparing to go back to his job as cupbearer to the king. The wall may have been finished, but that meant that life was just beginning in Jerusalem, full life with less fear of surrounding peoples since there was a new wall to protect them. In order to move forward, Nehemiah had to rely on those who were staying to carry on what had been started. He took note of all who were there and made appropriate appointments for them.

As we prepare to go home, we may see the culmination of the vision which God had placed in our hearts for this team, but the work is not finished. For those who accepted Christ while we were here, growth and discipleship is the next step. For building and water projects, there is maintenance and expansion. For medical camps, people will get sick again. This is why we come alongside our global partners and join them in their work. They are continually serving the people that we have grown to love. This is their home. Our teams are not a "flash-in-the-pan," but a part of a process...an important part that brings support and encouragement to those serving in challenging situations. Seacoast partners are typically local churches or organizations that serve through the local church. We want the local church to be seen as hero, the light on a hill and not us. The work continues long after we return home.

So, what can you do after you return home? Pray!

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For our global church partners and ministries that serve alongside them.
- That the seeds that have been planted would grow to maturity and bring about much fruit.
- That the local church will truly become the hope of the world.



DAY 10

NEHEMIAH 8

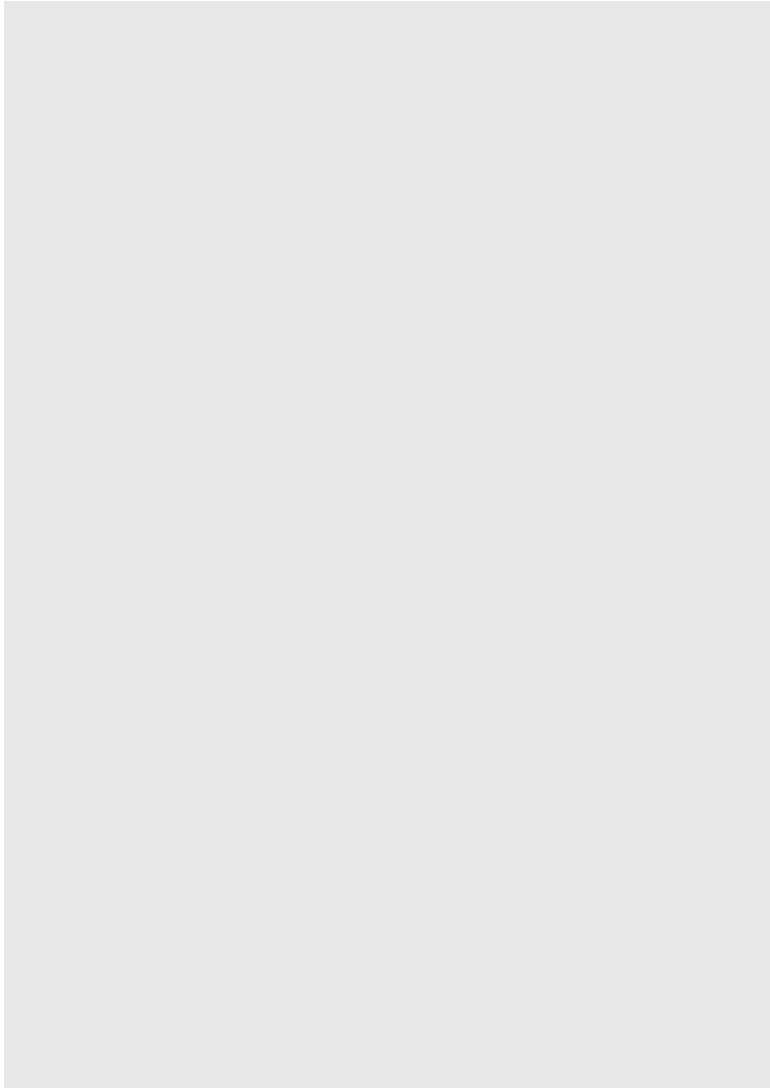
We've come thousands of miles to another country to serve the Lord and His people. We've seen Him do mighty things through medical clinics, leadership training, construction opportunities, serving in schools and various community projects. All of these things are incredible and bless those we've come to serve, but God's true vision involves people's hearts. Often we meet people's physical needs to show them the love of Christ and create opportunities to share the God's word, the true reason we go.

Nehemiah knew this was true as well. After completing the wall in only 52 days, he knew that the people's hearts were open to learning more about this God that made the reconstruction possible. They knew of Him, but they did not know Him. Nehemiah knew they needed to hear from God through His word, so he assembled the people and asked Ezra to read from the scriptures. Because the physical needs of the people had been met, they were open to truly hearing God's Word.

What may be most exciting is that when they heard the Word of the Lord, it was commanded that they celebrate! How often do we see reading God's Word as something we HAVE to do? And yet the Israelites celebrated for 7 days straight with feasting. As you come out of your quiet time today, let it be a celebration of all that God has done in and through you on this trip. Let your joy spill over into those who minister alongside and those to whom you've been ministering. Try to share one scripture today with someone who needs to the power of God's Word in his or her life.

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- To know God better through His Word.
- To be able to confidently share His Word with those to whom you're ministering.
- To better celebrate the joy that comes from God's Word.



DAY 11

NEHEMIAH 9

Nehemiah proclaims God's greatness and all that He's done for Israel throughout the centuries. We see this over and over in scripture and yet each description of what God has done is different, because He has done SO much! His history with Israel was one of kindness and forgiveness. It's also about glorifying Himself through mighty works done through His people. From God's original covenant with Abram to Nehemiah's day, God has been at work as Author and Creator.

Nehemiah also tells of how the Israelites were unfaithful over and over again, but God did not give up. The New Testament reminds us that it's His kindness that leads us to repentance, and we see proof of this in the nation of Israel. It's Israel's confession that brings the nation back into relationship with God over and over again.

God is also in the midst of writing our story...and it's probably not so different from that of the Israelites. God has done mighty things in and through our lives, and we have sinned against Him over and over - only to be led back into relationship with Him through His kindness and our repentance. What an incredible God we serve! What an incredible story He has given us...a story to share with others, not only in foreign lands but when we return to our family and friends in the States. What story has He been writing with your life? What has He done in and through you on this trip?

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For forgiveness of your sins that may be keeping you from Him.
- For an understanding of what God has been doing in and through you on this trip.
- For words to communicate God's greatness to those you will share your journey with back in the States.

DAY 12

NEHEMIAH 10

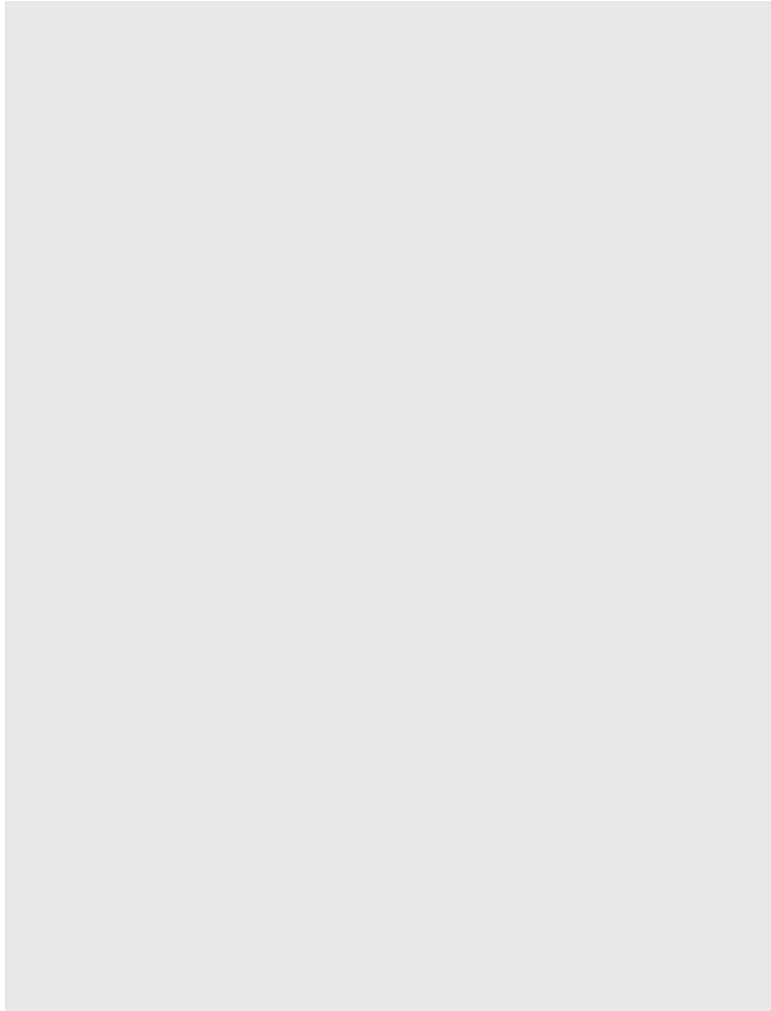
Chapter 10 starts off with representatives of the Israelite nation signing an agreement to walk in the way the Lord commanded. It is true repentance - agreeing with the Lord and changing direction to line up with His way. The people together make the choice to be set apart for God. They decide that following God's plan is better than following their own or the world's. Basically, they have re-upped in their commitment to follow the Lord after seeing Him work mightily in their lives and hearing His powerful words.

Often we experience this on a mission trip. We too have seen Him do mighty things in our lives, the lives of our fellow team members, and in those to whom we came to serve. Being away from distractions, we have heard His voice through powerful quiet times and in the words of others over the last week or two. And we are not the same. We are forever ruined for the ordinary. We will confess our sins to the Lord and ask that He help us be more obedient in our everyday lives. We will set certain goals and seek greater intimacy with Him once we return. What an incredible plan! The Lord is thrilled with our desire to remain close to Him and to better obey Him! Hopefully, the Kairos circle we learned in training will help make these desires a reality, but if you remember, this growth, this change requires more than just me. It requires a sounding board, wisdom, and accountability.

As we head home, some of us will disappear and go our separate ways. Some of us may cling to only those in our group. Hopefully all of us will maintain these relationships which were a gift during this time. We need these people to help us continue to grow. Only our teams know what we experienced on our trip - both as a group and individually. We can help each other continue to become who God created us to be...even when we get back. How can your teammates help you with the goals you've set up with God during this trip? How can you help them?

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For the change that God started in you on this trip to continue to completion.
- For the humility to allow others on your team to help you walk through God's plan for you.
- For direction in serving others on your team as they continue to live out God's changes in their lives.



DAY 13

NEHEMIAH 11:1-12:26

Nehemiah knew all of the people he was leaving behind to do the work of the ministry and gave them the authority to do the work they were gifted and prepared to do. Singers sang, leaders led, priests fulfilled the duties of ministering to the people...and Nehemiah confirmed them all!

The Lord placed people on this trip to minister to you, to encourage you, to lead you, maybe even to sing to you. He has also used you to do things in the lives of others. Now you'll be preparing to leave not only the country, but also the people. It's important to leave well.

As you prepare to leave, make sure you've taken time to speak into all those you have been blessed to work with. Pull aside the missionaries who have led you well and tell them how God has used them to change your heart or your perspective. Write a note to the head of the organization explaining how incredible their people are and how God is working through them specifically. Speak words of life and encouragement about your leaders to those you're serving with...brag on them! Be intentional about telling your teammates about how their words and actions have led to growth in your life. How has God used them to minister to you or change you? Keep in mind that sometimes God uses people as holy sandpaper. Probably don't tell people that, but do tell them that their influence has drawn you closer to God.

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For the words to best encourage the missionaries being left behind.
- For the opportunity to see others as God sees them.
- For the strength and humility to receive words that God wants you to have.

DAY 14

NEHEMIAH 12:27-47

Nehemiah is not one to forgo celebrations. Once again Nehemiah and the Israelites celebrate God's work. This time they are not only celebrating God for the work He did on the wall but also the work He's done in their hearts – transformation inside and out. All the leaders are acknowledged and the choirs are commanded to sing – a HUGE celebration on top of the wall, no less!

We have been able to celebrate as well. Maybe we went out for supper our last night in country or maybe we went zip lining or on safari, but we celebrated what God did over the last week or two! We also have this opportunity to celebrate the One who made it all happen – from being accepted on the team to raising the money to preparations to safe travel to mighty ministry to team unity. All of this comes from one Source – God!

Today is simply a day to praise Him, to celebrate all that He has done over our last few months! He has blessed us in ways that we may not even recognize for years. How has He blessed you through the preparation for this trip? What has He done for you while actually on the trip? What has He started in you that He will see to completion as we return home? Praise His name among your team members and among those to whom you're recounting the story when we get home! He is worthy to be praised!

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- To recognize all the incredible things He has done for you on this trip.
- To be able to share about this trip in a way that glorifies Him first and foremost.
- To celebrate alongside your teammates for all He has done in and through your team.

DAY 15

NEHEMIAH 13

Nehemiah utilizes one last chance to remind the people of God's plans for His people. He commands the Israelites to follow God's Word and charges them to be set apart from those who would lead them away from God. Finally he purifies the priests and Levites (church workers) to set them up for success. The last line of the book is very telling of Nehemiah and his motives. It was all about serving God. God had broken his heart for the people of Israel and sent him on a mission trip of sorts. Nehemiah went not for his own glory or even simply the experience, but out of obedience. Would he have been able to stand in the face of the constant opposition if he had not been serving the Lord? I don't know for sure, but I know I wouldn't be able to.

As we return home (or have returned home), we need to remember why we went on this journey. We may have had secondary motives of finally doing a mission trip or it's our "Christian duty" or we've always wanted to travel to _____. But our primary motive was to be obedient to God's call on our lives. The exciting thing is that this calling is not over! God is not sending us home as those who have finished the battle, but as those being restationed.

How exciting that our journey is not over! In fact, He keeps starting new things in our lives! What is the next act of obedience that God is calling us to? Is it to join a small group or serve in a certain neighborhood or start a new organization? As long as we're obedient and do it for His glory, we will be right in the middle of His path for us.

TODAY LET'S PRAY

- For a renewed desire for obedience in the small and big things.
- For excitement for this new part of the journey.
- For pure motives in serving God at home and abroad should He call us back.



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