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# RE:SOLUTION.

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being a solution is better than a resolution.



*12-day devotional*



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## INTRODUCTION

**W**hen you start this devotional, you are probably into the third week of the New Year. Assuming you did make some New Year resolutions, it's very likely that approximately 80% of them will fail by the second week of February. Prophetic? No, just that statistics collected on resolutions over the years have proven this pattern.

Jack Malcolm<sup>1</sup>, President of Falcon Performance Group in training and communication advised, "There's a reason we call them re-solutions: we keep making them over and over, and we keep solving the same old problems over and over...But if the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results, why not begin again a little more intelligently? That's why I'm suggesting solutions instead of resolutions." Malcolm highlighted the following:

- Resolutions are positive and make you feel good but do not give you the impetus to act. Crafting a solution requires addressing the problem, especially the cost for not solving it. For example, you may be grossly overweight, but you may not be motivated to lose weight until you see a similar case confined to a sick bed. Solutions motivate us to act.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jackmalcolm.com/2014/01/solutions-not-resolutions/>

b. Resolutions can be shallow. It's easy to come up with a resolution if some behaviour is lacking or excessive, and you resolve to do more or less of it in the coming year. Solutions are deep; you recognise a problem, and you think, you analyse, you diagnose and you figure out a realistic and sustainable approach, and—most importantly—you plan. When you have thought more deeply about it, you would have fully engaged your brain and heart, so you will forge a much stronger commitment.

c. In the same vein, resolutions can lead you to underestimate the inevitable obstacles or overestimate the willpower that your future self will have. Solutions anticipate the inevitable problems, so that you're not surprised or discouraged when they occur and you can figure out contingency plans in advance.

d. Solutions imply that you can take progressive steps toward your goal, and that you can be flexible and ingenious in your strategies to get back on track when you miss it. Solutions focus first on process and let the results follow. With

resolutions, you tend to measure by just the end results and if these are not achieved, you try again.

For this year then, would you consider finding solutions, either for yourself, your loved ones or those around you? Better still, become God's solution to someone in need—resolving problems in His time and in His ways. It will bring a fresh perspective to seeking and serving the Lord, helping and serving others, making a difference in overcoming obstacles and leading others to take bold steps of faith. Start by committing yourself with this prayer:

**...become God's  
solution to  
someone in need—  
resolving problems  
in His time and in  
His ways.**

“

*Our Father,*

*Thank you for this brand new year. I want to start well by becoming useful—providing solutions to those who have needs. Open my ears to hear and my eyes to see the distress and dilemma. Place in my heart the same kind of love and burden you have for them.*

*You created us, and when we are hurting and broken, it is only logical to look to you Lord, for the right answers that will restore us and revive us. Lead me by your Holy Spirit to deliver your solutions at the right time and in the right way.*

*In Jesus Name, I pray. Amen.*



# DAY 01

## NEHEMIAH, HELPER AND COMFORTER

### SCRIPTURES

*The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*

#### Context

The Bible is filled with stories of people who willingly became God's solution to others—the greatest of whom is our Lord Jesus Christ. This season, we are looking into a wonderful character in the Old Testament, someone whom we can identify with easily. He worked in the secular world and his name is Nehemiah.

Before delving straight into what he did, let's look at the background to his story<sup>2</sup>.

We begin with the book of Ezra followed by the book of Nehemiah. They are closely linked historical narratives that record the state of the Jews that were held in Babylonian captivity from 606 B.C. until 536 B.C.—a total of seventy years.

By the time of Nehemiah, the political, social and spiritual conditions of Jerusalem were in shambles. Sometime around 587 BC, Jerusalem was destroyed, along with Solomon's temple.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.shmoop.com/ezra-and-nehemiah/summary.html> Shmoop Bible guide: Ezra and Nehemiah summary. Overview and detailed summary of Ezra and Nehemiah by PhD students from Stanford, Harvard, Berkeley.

This was the third Babylonian campaign into Judah, and each time the Babylonian armies took more and more Israelites captive, resettling them in Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were among those taken during the first invasion.

About 70 years after the first invasion, Cyrus, king of Persia (who had since conquered the Babylonians), gave the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews who returned, and they laid the foundation and rebuilt the temple. This was in 536 B.C. The second group of Jews returned in 458 B. C. led by Ezra, a priest and scribe of God's law. He reorganised the temple worship and taught the laws. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Israel seemed on the verge of becoming a blessed nation again. However, the people refused to turn away from the same sins God had judged their ancestors for in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. The temple was not maintained properly because the rebuilding process were halted several times, and remained neglected. The people weren't offering sacrifices and the brokenness in their spiritual and social lives was clearly reflected by the broken down walls and gates of their Holy City.

The third group to return was led by Nehemiah in 444 B.C., a delay of 92 years since the first group of exiles returned. They rebuilt the gates and repaired the walls. Because he was focused, dedicated and possessed great leadership skill in overcoming obstacles and threats, he and his men completed the task in only 52 days. It enabled Ezra's teaching ministry to flourish again, leading to a national revival.

## **Who is Nehemiah?**

Born in exile, Nehemiah eventually rose to the position of cupbearer to the Persian king, Artaxerxes I. Combining the roles of "prime minister" with master of ceremonies, the position of cupbearer was a key role, with confidential access to the king. Assassination was a constant threat to a king in those days, and poisoned food or drink was one of the most effective ways to accomplish it. The cupbearer,

the one who ensured that the king's food and drink were safe, was in a position of great trust and responsibility. Also he must have possessed great skills and a winning personality to ascend to such heights in the Persian government.

Even though he was enjoying power and importance, Nehemiah, a devout Jew had not forgotten his people and homeland. When he heard of their sad and pathetic conditions, he identified himself as one of them and took action.

Even though his people were negligent and careless, he exuded confidence in a God that will forgive and help them along the way. He took a series of practical steps to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, steps that we can follow to rebuild the brokenness in our lives and the lives of others.

We hope that as you seek the Lord in prayer and fasting, wanting to serve and make a difference to other people's lives, this 12-day devotional on the book of Nehemiah may guide you in finding:

- a. A renewed confidence in God—that He is deeply interested in matters He has placed on your heart
- b. That problem solving is not just about hoping and praying, but applying practical steps similar to those Nehemiah took to complete his task.

It involved much prayer, much planning, connecting people and a fair amount of hard work. But he didn't have to do it alone: God helped him along the way and He will help you as well!

**For I am the Lord  
your God, who  
takes hold of your  
right hand and  
says to you, do  
not fear; I will  
help you.  
—Isaiah 41:13**

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## Observations

- a. Nehemiah was the person that the disheartened exiles desperately needed. He was there in God's time to fill the gap when no one else seemed willing. This season, will you answer God's call and become the helper and comforter to the disheartened?
- b. As he fulfilled a necessary mission in his day, Nehemiah demonstrated the highest level of dedication and courage, both in the secular matter of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and also in the spiritual matter of rebuilding the religious life of his people. What impact did his effort make - on the Jews and on the King of Persia?

## Application

- a. Are you aware of any disheartened souls that may need help and leadership from you? Are you willing to stand in the gap for a friend, the family, the church or even for the nation, when God calls?
- b. Most members of the church are in "secular" businesses in one form or another. If you are one of them, are you courageous enough to resolve problems in the issues that God puts before you? How can we be sensitive to non-believers and yet apply spiritual ministry in the course of our secular work?

## Respond & Pray

*Father God,*

*Thank you for creating me for such a time as this. There is probably someone, or some situation in my workplace, the church or in Singapore that may need counsel or practical assistance. If I am the solution, cause events to bring me into that situation. Guide and direct me to repair and restore with all the skills placed in my hands, be it spiritual ministry or work skills. Amen.*

# DAY 02

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## IDENTIFY OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 1:3-4—They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”<sup>4</sup>When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed.*

### Observations

- a. We see that Nehemiah cared deeply about what’s happening in Jerusalem—even though, he was enjoying a high “secular” position in Persia. Why so?
- b. V.8: Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations...’ Having identified himself with the problem, what caused him to weep and to mourn? How severe could the repercussions be if no action was taken? Read verses 8-10.
- c. The Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem while on earth. Find the cause of it from the gospels of Matthew and Luke and compare it with Nehemiah.

## Application

- a. If you are successful and doing well in your profession, business or vocation, would you identify and weep with fellow Christians who need assistance? Are you prepared to make a difference even though the help rendered goes unnoticed?
- b. Often, the physical condition of a situation or a person reflects the spiritual state. Are you prepared to apply biblical principles to a “secular” problem?
- c. Do we lament and weep for situations or people within the church or do we brush them aside as somebody else’s problem?

## Respond & Pray

*Father God,*

*Thank you for choosing me as part of your royal priesthood as written in 1 Peter 2:9.*

*Place in my heart the people and things you care for, O God. Show me how to be a priest and a skilled workman at the same time.*

*In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.*

# DAY 03

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## MEANING OF THE WALLS AND GATES

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 1:3-4—They said to me, "...wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."<sup>4</sup>When I heard these things, I sat down and wept.*

### Observations

We will stay on these opening verses for another day to understand the significance of the walls and gates of Jerusalem and its conditions and to discover how it can relate to our Christian living.

In the olden days, walls are put up to protect the towns and cities from attacks from the enemies. The fortress is also a welcome sight of security and hope for weary travellers who made long and dangerous journeys to the city. The gate is a mechanism of government and control where people and resources beneficial to the community are received. Conversely, undesirable elements are either barred from entry or thrown out. In Jerusalem, the walled city protects a very important place—the temple where God presence resides. To the Jews, no walls meant no city, no city meant no

temple, no temple meant no presence of God. Perhaps Nehemiah understood the severity of the situation enough to sit down and weep.

### Application

- a. If your body is the temple of God's Spirit, what are "the walls and gates" in your life? Extend that same question to the lives of your family, church and nation. (1 Corinthians 6:19)
- b. When you look back on your life, perhaps you realise that there are areas where the "walls" have broken down. It may be a breakdown of relationship in your home, a breakdown of responsibility or a reluctance to let go of habits that hinder your growth. Before things can change for the better, prepare to start with a reality check and an honest assessment of your spiritual life.
- c. Do we trust God enough to allow Him to expose our brokenness and lead us to paths of restoration? Consider how this is a blessing in disguise.
- d. Building of the wall and gates began with the Sheep Gate in Nehemiah 3. It is the entrance where devotees bring their

offerings of sheep and lamb on their way to the temple. The priest Eliashib led in restoring it. Who do you think had begun restoring the sheep gate for us to enter the Kingdom of God?

**They said to me, "... wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept.**  
—Nehemiah 1:3-4

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## Response

- a. Make an effort to learn about the various aspects of God's Kingdom life. Evaluate which are the areas that you feel may be missing, broken or need strengthening in your own life.
- b. Perhaps you are helping someone else build back these areas. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you the way. Consider the implications if these early signals are ignored.
- c. How can you serve and benefit others with these experiences?

## Pray

*Father God,  
Often times we pray "Thy Kingdom come" without realising it is here. Perhaps it is because our walls and gates are so broken down that our lives are no different from non-believers. Unknowingly, we have let down our guards. Thank you for revealing to us the principles, the truth and the disciplines to be rebuilt and restored in order to experience the joy and richness living in your Kingdom while on earth. We thank you for sending your Son Jesus Christ to be the sacrificial Lamb. As the High priest, he has led in building the Sheep gate so that whosoever believed in Him can enter and enjoy your living in your Kingdom. Amen.*

# DAY 04

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## FAST, PRAY, AND PLAN

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 1:6-7— let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup>We have acted very wickedly toward you.*

### Observations

Now that he had seen the magnitude of the task, the first thing Nehemiah did was to fast and pray. Here, we will try to pick up some pointers included in his prayers.

- a. Right **Priority**: Often we quibble over which come first—prayer or planning. Someone gave this wise counsel - “Pray first and plan; that done, better plan to pray”.
- b. **Posture** before God: He expresses humility, earnestness and a contrite heart in wanting to change. He interceded and prayed for four months before starting work.
- c. **Personal** responsibility: Nehemiah honestly faced his own guilt with responsibility. There is an absence of self-righteousness,

refusing to blame anybody else. He is a leader who takes initiative and personal responsibility.

- d. Trust in God's gracious **Promises**: After the confession of sins and repentance, Nehemiah placed his confidence in God's forgiveness and His promise. He reminded God of His word in v.9..."I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'
- e. He ended his prayer with supplications to begin the **Process** of rebuilding. Placed in similar circumstances, what do you think your supplications would be in your prayers? Why would Nehemiah venture a request that mean severe repercussions?

## Application

- a. Even before we jump start the process of rebuilding our own or others lives, would we consider spending time in prayer and fasting? Are we ready to prepare clean hands and a contrite heart before approaching the Holy Spirit to partner Him?
- b. How committed are you to take on such a project? It could mean taking time off from your work. You would need that deep conviction and assurance from God through an extended time of fast and prayer.

## Respond & Pray

*Thank You, Father, for this wonderfully practical book that sets out the right guideline to recovery and usefulness. Help me to begin where Nehemiah began—with prayer, fasting, confidence, and obedience to Your Word! In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.*

# DAY 05

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## FASTING

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 1:4—So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*

*Matthew 6:17-18—But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*

### Observations

- a. Mr. Andrew Murray (1820-1917) was a South African pastor, writer and teacher. He clarified the relationship between prayer and fasting. "Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolve that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God."

- b. Nehemiah fasted. It was not about dieting nor was he too depressed to eat. The fast was intentional. What do you think are the reasons?
- c. There are right and wrong reasons to fast. Isaiah lays out God's instructions and promise in Isaiah 58:6, 9-11,  
*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen . . .  
 If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
 with the pointing finger and malicious talk,  
 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
 and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
 then your light will rise in the darkness,  
 and your night will become like the noonday.  
 The Lord will guide you always.*

How would you regard Nehemiah's fast?

## Application

**Purpose:** Like Nehemiah who was a palace advisor, the constant demand on our mind, the distractions and the noise can weigh us down and put us in a spiritual fog. As we get tired and weighed down, our conscience can become desensitised. God's voice is slowly muffled, and we begin to lose our passion for Him. The fire within dims, and we shift into autopilot, operating from obligation or routine in our relationship with God.

Fasting hits the reset button of our soul. To receive the new things God wants to bring into our lives, we have to periodically do this. This is what I call experiencing a newness of soul. What a powerful gift we have been given through fasting.

Along with your fasting, make sure you slow your pace and remove distractions. Try to add moments of silence and solitude to your fasting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpts taken from *Awakening: A New Approach to Faith, Fasting, and Spiritual Freedom* by Stovall Weems (pp. 68-71)

## DAY 05

**Posture:** Too many people fast with a strict mind-set that focuses on abstaining. When done right, fasting is something that everyone should enjoy. Of course, it involves letting go of our attention on food, habits or routines, but it is really a desire to position us to hear from God.

Fasting is for every believer. You get a revelation of God's Word when you fast that you simply cannot get any other way. Disconnecting from the distractions of the world through fasting, and connecting into the power and presence of God through prayer, brings a supernatural freshness and newness to our souls.

**Type:** What will you be fasting from in the next 2 weeks? Your fast doesn't necessarily have to be food. You could fast from TV, social media or anything that would help you be more intentional to focus on God and His Word. It can be fasting from a meal a day or abstaining from solid food but depending on fruit juices.

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**Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolve that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.**

**—Andrew Murray**

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**How to:** Please refer to the comprehensive guide provided in the following link to prepare before and after your fast: [www.wikihow.com/Fast-As-a-Christian](http://www.wikihow.com/Fast-As-a-Christian)

## Respond & Pray

*Father God,*

*As I begin this prayer and fast with others, allow me to align myself to your vision for the church and me. Consider this my desire to clear my spiritual eye and ear gates of static and open my mind to your counsel. I repent of our wrongs as people of God and ask for forgiveness. Renew in us the love and the care of Jesus for his flock. Show us your heart's desire to help those who are living in disgrace, danger and in need of help. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

# DAY 06

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## REBUILDING NEEDS RESOURCES

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 2: 1–9*

*Nehemiah 2:6—Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?” It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.*

### Observations

- a. Notice that Nehemiah did not pray and then simply wait for things to happen. In the four months of fasting and prayer, what practical steps did he take to commence work?
- b. Identify four things he asked of the King that shows respect for authority and an eye for opportunities, e.g. favour for time-off, etc.

### Application

- a. The passage suggests that if we are truly concerned about rebuilding parts of our life, we need to think seriously about what it will require. We must assess what we will actually need,

what steps to take, and what may be involved in changing our habits so that restoration intended by God can be achieved.

- b. All projects require resources—people, materials, etc. Like Nehemiah, perhaps we are not sure where these will come from.
- c. The word “Re-Source” means Re-turn to the original Source to get hold of whatever we need. God is the Originator of all things and provisions and it’s only natural He should be the first source to turn to. James 4:2 says, “You do not have because you do not ask God”.
- d. God often uses secular channels to provide the resources we need. We should not be too “spiritualised” or too proud to reject them when these are provisions from the Lord. He may put you in touch with people who have the resources and skills to help you move forward. As Proverbs 21:1 states, “In the Lord’s hand the king’s heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him”.
- e. There’s a story told about Mother Teresa, who went walking door-to-door to raise money for her orphans. At one door, when she asked for help, a man spat in her face. She took her habit, wiped her face clean and said, “Well, that’s for me. That’s for my humility. Now how about something for the children?” The man gave her some money.

## Respond & Pray

*Father,*

*Thank you Lord that not only can you use us to rebuild others, you are always ready to pour out your favour through those around us. We ask you Lord to become our primary source of all the resources that we need (name 3 resources you need).*

*Open the hearts that will provide these resources.*

*Amen.*

# DAY 07

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## SURVEY AND VERIFY THE GROUND CONDITION

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 2:11-16—<sup>13</sup>By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire... Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the Valley Gate.*

*Luke 14:28-29—Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup>For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'*

### Observations

The verses today offer some very practical insights when implementing a project:

- a. We can do all the planning and preparation from the top, but when it comes to implementing a project or starting a mission, where should the leaders be?
- b. Nehemiah conducted a reality check to convince himself that whatever he had in mind is actually happening on the ground.

He avoids the danger of underestimating the situation where he might be caught unprepared. But what do you think would happen if he overestimated the damages?

- c. Why did Nehemiah take the trouble of counting the cost? Do you think it was necessary since God was in it? How would you align yourself to the advice given in Luke 14:28 about doing God's work?
- d. Nehemiah did his initial phase of the work by night, to avoid arousing rumours and confusing people who were to work with him. Was this wisdom or a lack of confidence?

## Application

- a. There is a tendency to stereotype our approach when ministering to people. Would we consider a reality check before administering advice? For example, would we be open and honest in assessing the person we are trying to help if he is in sin and that his actions must first be dealt with?
- b. The bible teaches us to count our costs, but what happens if we miscalculate? Consider this saying from John Piper, expounding 1 Corinthians 10:13. He said, "...if I survive any test or accomplish any work when I am tested, it is decisively grace, not decisively me. God will never give his people trials in which he will not sustain them and bring them through to everlasting glory."

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**Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?**  
—Luke 14:28

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**DAY**  
**07**

**Respond & Pray**

*Father God,  
Make us more careful and thorough in rebuilding others.  
Help us in assessing the damages and costs before starting  
the work so that we would not give up mid-way. Give us  
patience when there are long periods of testing but give us  
the grace that ultimately, we can accomplish and complete  
the task to your glory.*

*Thank You in Jesus Name. Amen.*

# DAY 08

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## MENTAL PREPARATION— THE VALLEY EXPERIENCES

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 2:13—By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem...*

*Genesis 37:28—So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.*

### Observations

- a. Notice how of all the gates, Nehemiah moved through the Valley gates before embarking on the major task of rebuilding the city. What is the significance of this entry point and his journey to reach the Fountain gate?
- b. To strengthen our faith, do a brief study of some characters in the Bible who experienced “low points” in their lives not as a consequence of sin but as part of God’s plan for them to fulfil their destiny: <http://www.biblestudyresources.org/valley-experiences-of-bible-characters.html>

## Application

- a. Why is the Dung gate situated between the Valley gate and the Fountain gate? Possibly, a pictorial representation of how God restores us.

The fountain gate is the entrance to the Kings Pool where there is a continuous flow of drinking water. It speaks of the living waters of the Holy Spirit that cleanse and empower us in our Christian living. Jesus said: 'Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' (John 7:38). To reach and drink from the ever-flowing fountain, one has to pass through the Valley gate (which speaks of trials and low points) to flush out the rubbish in our lives, which are cleared out through the Dung gate. The valley type experiences are used by the Lord for our personal growth. It is never a nice experience but it always produce fruit and prepare us for greater things.

- b. The walls spanning the Valley gate is the longest section of all the walls; it suggests that when rebuilding lives, there will be long seasons where God will allow trials to bring out the best in people. In the process, we develop patience and endurance—virtues in our Christian growth.
- c. Like Joseph in the book of Genesis, be prepared for God's orientation training—the walk through deep valley experiences that are intended to strip off "dung" habits, fears, etc. hanging around our lives. Some of these may even look perfectly acceptable in our eyes, but will hinder the success of God's work. Are you willing?

## Respond & Pray

*Father God,*

*I may not be aware of my strengths and weaknesses or those of the persons I am helping. Reveal them O Lord as you lead us through “valley experiences”. Help us to strip off those attributes and habits that may become liabilities in your work. In their place, guide us to put on Christ. Romans 13:4 “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.” Thank you for your grace and patience in preparing us.*

*In Jesus name, Amen*

# DAY 09

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## MOBILISE THE PEOPLE

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 2:17-18—Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”<sup>18</sup>I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.*

### Observations

- a. At the right time, Nehemiah rallied and mobilised the community to start work on the project with the cry, “Come and let us rebuild”. Apart from this open invitation, what other essentials can you discover in the call? E.g. a collective problem, an impending disaster, etc.
- b. The project meant a lot to every Jew and their response was “let us start rebuilding”. Do you think mobilisation should be a call for “all hands on deck”, OR restricted only to those who agree or share a common interest? What is the benefit of involving

many? After all, more people mean more opinions and more problems.

- c. In business projects, potential investors would want to know who are the major “backers” before they put in their own resources. Who did Nehemiah introduce as his “backers”? Do we hold similar level of confidence in considering God as a major backer in our projects?

## Application

- a. God uses all manner of people in all manner of places doing all manner of work. If you feel you need to be in full-time ministry in order to serve God, be encouraged—He is not limited by your vocation. In fact, God has placed you where you are for a purpose. Develop this attitude about your work: “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17). Will you apply your vocation and talent for the Lord?
- b. We all have a role in the church (Romans 12:4-8). When you’re tempted to wonder whether your little bit matters, remember—you make a huge difference! We are all ordinary people with unique gifts. But when we’re using our gifts and working together, we can make a bigger difference than any one of us would alone. The church’s mission—to go into all the world and make disciples—is

**For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**

**—Romans 12:4-5**

too big for one person. In Nehemiah, everyone worked hard on a specific task—some are large while others are like small repairs. Everyone shared the burden in some way and together they finished the job. The wall builders were not professional builders; they were ordinary people just like you and me, but willing to follow an extraordinary vision.

### Respond & Pray

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*Dear Lord Jesus,  
We are ordinary people but with an extraordinary God!  
Thank you for pouring your all in us. May this year be the  
season we will respond to your call and be mobilised to  
serve you through every aspect of our everyday life - in our  
family, amongst friends, in the office, etc. Open our eyes to  
the consequence of not doing so. Amen.*

# DAY 10

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## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES AND OPPOSITION

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 2:10—When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.*

*Nehemiah 2:19—But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked.*

*Nehemiah 4:1—When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed.*

*Nehemiah 4:4-5—Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup>Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.*

*1 Peter 2:23—“While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” (NASB 1995)*

## Observations

- a. Who in a project is usually the target of the most opposition and criticism?
- b. What do you think are the sources of criticism and their motives?
- c. Why did the level of ridicules grow in intensity? Refer to the verses above.
- d. How do we differentiate between constructive criticism and destructive criticism? Do we draw the line based on truth or personal preferences?
- e. How did Nehemiah respond to criticism and opposition to his work?

## Application

- a. Chuck Swindoll had an excellent thought on handling criticism: "If you never get criticised, chances are you aren't getting anything done". As you lead the change affecting other people's lives, are you mentally prepared for this fact?
- b. Consider this approach in responding to criticism: J. Oswald Sanders observed, "No leader is exempt from criticism, and his humility will nowhere be seen more clearly than in the manner in which he accepts and reacts to it".
- c. Every leader must listen to criticism with discernment. Determine the source and the motive of the criticism. A wise leader will evaluate the opposition in the light of the spirit and attitude in which criticism is given. He will also consider the voice to which the opposition listens. If your critic listens to God's voice, you had better listen to them (*Hand Me Another Brick*, p.67)<sup>4</sup>.
- d. On the other hand, if they are not listening to His voice, we need to decide not to allow anyone but God to stop the work.

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<sup>4</sup>"Brick by Brick" 31 Day Devotional Guide through the Book of Nehemiah - Green Street Baptist Church

Learn to keep your eyes focused on the Lord and His will. If you are at the centre of the will of God one day at a time, you will always be doing the will of God everyday of your life.

- e. Nehemiah 4:4-5 provides some practical tips on how to respond. Firstly, he did not react to criticism with anger. He handed it over to God in prayer. Nehemiah did not retaliate. He asked God for help. Would you be open and acknowledge your feelings to God in asking for help?
- f. Remain focused in the project. Do not let ridicule and sarcasm become distractions that will “eat” at the progress of the work at hand.

## Respond & Pray

*Father God,*

*Thank you for the feedback, criticism and obstacles in doing your work. They are there to keep us on the straight and narrow path and often, make us humble. Give us the discernment to know the source and listen to the motives behind these voices. You are sovereign in these situations and where your work is hindered Lord, please remove the obstacles and the opposition.*

*In Jesus Name, Amen.*

# DAY 11

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## SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND FAITHFULNESS

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 2:20—I answered them by saying, “The GOD of heaven WILL GIVE us success. WE, his servants WILL START rebuilding...*

*Matthew 6:22—Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your vision is clear, your whole body also is full of light. But when it is poor, your body is full of darkness. (Berean Study Bible)*

### Observations

- a. Why is a clear vision important? What does the light in Matthew 6:22 refer to?
- b. It is often said, “It’s not how you start but how you finish that counts”. While God can grant success, what were the other qualities in the people that will ensure completion?
- c. In Nehemiah 2:20, what is the first sign of faithfulness in his servants?

## Application

- a. What are some of the ways to show faithfulness in the things God started in your life or already given to you, e.g. your gifts, talents, etc.
- b. The opposite of single minded is being double minded. Why is it foolish to be double minded? Read James 1: 6-8.
- c. 2 King 17:33 states, "They feared the LORD and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile." Do we have instances where we believe in the Lord Jesus but submit to "other gods" because of social pressure or circumstances?

## Respond & Pray

*Father God,  
Forgive us for times where we compromised our belief,  
principles and value system in order to blend in with the  
rest of the crowd. At other times, it may be to please our  
superiors or other people who have supported us well in  
the past. Cleanse us and show us how to be faithful and  
single minded to your commands. Your grace and mercy in  
Jesus Christ be upon us.*

*In Jesus Name. Amen.*

# DAY 19

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## END OF STORY?

### SCRIPTURES

*Nehemiah 6:15-16—So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup>And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.*

*Nehemiah 11:1-2—Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths were to dwell in other cities. <sup>2</sup>And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.*

*Nehemiah 12: 27—Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, with cymbals and stringed instruments and harps.*

## Observations

- a. The walls and gates were completed in 52 days, a task that previous generations were unable to complete. Even the enemies in other nations understood God was in it. Can you recall incidents in your own life where people expressed similar perceptions?
- b. The end of the work was the beginning of the reformation and transformed lives in the community. Highlight some key improvements and changes in the community from chapters 6-13. How have the walls contributed to this positive development?
- c. If similar improvements and changes were desirable in your family, life groups or the church at large, would you be able to reflect and confess that certain areas (gates and walls) could truly do with some repairs?

## Application

- a. After the walls were up, Nehemiah was able to populate the city, install a government, bring back worship and renew the spiritual covenant. When we help someone back on his feet, do we follow up to ensure that there is discipline in his life?
- b. One-tenth of the Jews stayed within the Holy City. Have you considered spending one-tenth of your time or contribute one-tenth of your resources/talent to God's church who may have helped in some ways to bring restoration into your life?
- c. Nehemiah 13 shows that the reformation and sanctification of our priestly lives is always evolving and progressing. However, it is only made possible if our beliefs, values, faith, etc. are established and built up like the walls and our disciplines are framed and operating like the well-oiled gates. The Lord will help us to do it but like the returning exiled Jews, we ourselves must put our hands to the plough.

## Respond

We started off this devotional series by asking which of these would be more useful and real to you for the New Year – resolutions or solutions. We hope this devotional has convinced you to provide solutions or better still, be a solution to help build lives. From Nehemiah, we learnt that the process of rebuilding is not haphazard but purposeful, prayerful, well planned and implemented in the light of adversity and internal challenges. We hope you are ready to:

- Hear and respond to a call from God
- Experience His burden for people and their situations
- Help to define the scope and reality of the situation
- Align your endeavours to the vision and direction of God
- Seek His will and provisions in prayer and fasting
- If it's corporate, share God's vision (make it simple for all to participate)
- Conduct careful planning and stay grounded
- Mobilise and build teams
- Be focused and keep the vision of the project before the people
- Be of good courage to overcome adversities and obstacles
- Infuse faith, love and hope all the way

## Pray

*Almighty God, Thank you for all the insights and wisdom from your Word. We pray that if this is the season that these words become life, make it evident and let it grow in each person in FGA. Lord, reveal the breaks and the gaps in our lives and the life of the church. We ask that your Holy Spirit, the Comforter will lead us to repent and to rebuild. Guide us and help us to overcome obstacles and adversities in the process. Keep us united as one and bring success so that it can only be perceived that You have done the work. All glory and honour unto you. In Jesus Name we ask and pray. Amen.*