



# SPIRITUAL GROWTH JOURNEY



THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH



## A Note from Pastor James

Hello Church Family,

I am looking forward to all God will do during this season as we journey together through the book of Nehemiah.

My prayer for each of us as we dive into Scripture over the next several weeks is to experience the presence of God in a new and fresh way. I am praying that the Holy Spirit will speak truth, love, and hope into your life each day as you encounter the wonderful and amazing Word of God.

Please join me in praying for God to challenge and change us through His Word.

Blessings to you, my friend.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Roberts', written over the text 'Blessings to you, my friend.'

James Roberts  
Senior Pastor

# Contents

How To Use This Book .....	3
S.O.A.P. Instructions, Tips, and Sample .....	4
The Book of Nehemiah Overview .....	8
Week 1:	
Sermon Notes .....	9
Group Guide .....	10
Weekly S.O.A.P.s .....	12
Week 2:	
Sermon Notes .....	22
Group Guide .....	23
Weekly S.O.A.P.s .....	25
Week 3:	
Sermon Notes .....	35
Group Guide .....	36
Weekly S.O.A.P.s .....	38
Week 4:	
Sermon Notes .....	48
Group Guide .....	49
Weekly S.O.A.P.s .....	51
Week 5:	
Sermon Notes .....	61
Group Guide .....	62
Weekly S.O.A.P.s .....	64
Week 6:	
Sermon Notes .....	74
Group Guide .....	75
Weekly S.O.A.P.s .....	77
Fall Small Group Serving Opportunities .....	87
Night of Worship Information .....	88
21 Days of Prayer & Fasting Information .....	88
References.....	89

# How to Use this Book

Welcome to our Spiritual Growth Journey: The Book of Nehemiah. For the next six weeks, we will focus on three things as a church:

- Attend a weekly service online or in person:  
Thursday 7:07 PM, Sunday 9:45 AM, and 11:15 AM
- Join a group
- Spend time individually with God each day

To get the most out of this journey, we encourage you to participate in all three. This book is a tool to help achieve these goals.

For each one of the six weeks, you will find the following resources here:

- A space for sermon notes
- That week's Group Guide (basis for your group discussion)
- A S.O.A.P. passage and guide for each of the remaining days for you to use in your time with God (with a day off to catch-up if you need it)

We have designed each week of this book to begin on Sundays. If you want to start on a different day of the week - no problem! Also, if you have found another model helpful and beneficial in engaging Scripture, please feel free to use that instead! S.O.A.P. is just one of many tools which help us to see what is happening in a biblical passage and how God might want us to apply that to our lives.

Make this book your own! Not everyone's journey looks the same, but what is important is that we are all moving toward God together and with intentionality.

# S.O.A.P. Instructions and Tips

Sometimes it can be hard to know how to get something out of reading your Bible. We don't want to just read, we want the words to transform us, give us hope, guidance, and help us become more like Jesus. The S.O.A.P. tool is one way to help dig in deeper.

## What does S.O.A.P. mean?

S– The S stands for Scripture

As you read that passage for each day, be on the lookout for words or phrases that strike you. Take a few minutes to physically write them down, making yourself slow down and take them in.

O– The O stands for observation

Ask yourself questions like: What is happening in the passage? Who is the audience? What do you learn about God and people? Are there any examples, promises or commands to note? Sometimes it can help to record these things in a bullet list.

A– The A stands for Application

This is an opportunity for God's Word to become personal. Reflect on the following: what is God saying to me? How can I apply what I just read to my own personal life? What changes do I need to make? Is there a step of faith that I need to take?

P– The P stands for Prayer

Prayer is two-way communication with God. What do you sense God may want you to take away from your time? A step you need to take? Ask Him for help and encouragement if you need it. Use this time for confession and repentance if you need to, in order to restore your intimacy with him.

## **Example S.O.A.P.**

Author: Tim Lucas

### **Scripture: James 1:22-27**

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive ourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

### **Observation:**

- James is very concerned with his recipients understanding what true spiritual growth is. Not just learning things but putting them into practice in a way that gives life.
- He also shares that not doing what the word says causes confusion in our lives and the lives of others.
- The way to blessing is by approaching the word with a confidence that following it will bring freedom and joy.
- Another emphasis here is the connection between spiritual maturity and what words come out of our mouths.
- Then, he moves very practically to how we can show that our 'religion' is pure and meaningful; by caring for and providing things for orphans and widows.

**Application:**

- One of the ways I can work toward applying this in my life is to ask the Holy Spirit to help me put into practice what I read in my time with God.
- Then, I can ask God to help me recognize opportunities in real time to do what the word says.
- Recalling to mind that freedom, joy, and blessing come from walking in God's ways.
- Be aware of those around me who are in need (such as widows and orphans) and be exceedingly generous toward them.

**Prayer:**

Lord, thank you for loving me and speaking to me personally. Help my faith to increase and my trust level to deepen in you, especially when you call me to things that seem outside of my control. Time after time in my life you have provided for me. You are faithful, lead me to a greater dependence and obedience in my daily walk with you.

## Other Tips For Your Devotional Time

You can expect that your S.O.A.P. devotional time will take about 15-20 minutes each day. It isn't a strict rule to be followed, but a model that you can use to interact with God. Some days might be easier than others, some days might involve more insight than others.

Please reference the S.O.A.P. examples as a template for how others have used this tool. Everyone brings their own style and personality to this tool. That's good! This is your time with God; it doesn't need to be done in a rigid and rote way.

The most important part is that you exercise these spiritual muscles. God will speak! All we have to do is be willing to spend time with him.

It can be helpful to decide ahead of time where and when you will spend this devotional time in Scripture and with God. If it helps to decide and commit to that here and now, go ahead! You may want to share these with your group for accountability and encouragement.

**The place I will spend my time with God each day for the next 6 weeks:**

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**The time I will spend my time with God each day for the next 6 weeks:**

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## **The Book of Nehemiah Overview**

- The theme of Nehemiah is the Lord's protection of his people and their need to be faithful in worship and in keeping the Mosaic law
- The book continues the story of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.
- Brief Summary: Nehemiah was a Hebrew in Persia when the word reached him that the Temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed. He grew anxious knowing there was no wall to protect the city. Nehemiah invited God to use him to save the city. God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, who gave not only his blessing, but also supplies to be used in the project. Nehemiah is given permission by the king to return to Jerusalem, where he is made governor.<sup>1</sup>

## **Author & Dates**

- The book is named for the principal character, Nehemiah, but it does not state its author.
- Much of the book is written from his first-person narrative.
- We know nothing about Nehemiah's youth; we do not
- The events narrated cover the years c. 445-432 B.C.

## **Key Themes<sub>2</sub>**

- The Lord hears prayers.
- The Lord works providentially, especially through powerful rulers, to bring about his greater purposes.
- The Lord protects his people. Because of this, they need not be afraid.
- The Lord is merciful and faithful to his promises despite his people's ongoing sin.
- Worship is at the center of the life of God's people. It includes the willing, joyful giving of resources.
- God's people need to be on their guard against their own moral weakness.

Week 1:

**Sermon Notes**

What stood out to me...

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One thing I learned about God...

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One thing I can apply to my life...

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How I'm going to pray this week...

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## **Week 1: Group Guide**

### **Break the Ice (15 Minutes)**

- What are you hoping to get out of this 6-week journey?
- Is there anything you're nervous about as we begin?
- What is your favorite fall activity?
- Finish this statement: It wouldn't be fall without \_\_\_\_\_?

\*Take a moment to discuss together any group guidelines that you would like to implement over the next 6 weeks.

### **Check-In (10 Minutes)**

- When and where are you hoping to spend your devotional time over these next 6 weeks?
- What impacted you the most about this week's sermon?
- Pray, thanking God for those present, and ask God to lead your discussion.

### **Learn Together (15 Minutes)**

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11

- What stands out to you the most about this passage?
- Why is Nehemiah so concerned about Jerusalem? What does he learn about its condition?
- What do you see of God's nature through Nehemiah's prayer?

### **Act On It (15 Minutes)**

- How important do you think prayer was for Nehemiah? How has prayer shaped your life?
- What is one way you would like to grow in prayer during this journey?
- How does confessing our sins lead to forgiveness? How does it prepare us for the plans God has for us?
- What needs do you see in your community that should be met?
- After hearing this week's message, or reading this passage, is there an action step that you think God wants you to take?

## Pray Together (10 Minutes)

As your group time closes, your group leader will give any updates or news that you might want to take note of. You will also pray as a group. Use this space to write down how you can pray for your group members throughout the coming week.

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Week 1:

**Monday S.O.A.P**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 1:1-11**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 1:

**Tuesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Psalm 4:1-8**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 1:

**Wednesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Psalm 17:1-5**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 1:

**Thursday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Acts 4:23-31**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 1:

**Friday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:18-29**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 2:

**Sermon Notes**

What stood out to me...

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One thing I learned about God...

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One thing I can apply to my life...

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How I'm going to pray this week...

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## Week 2:

### Group Guide

#### **Break the Ice (15 Minutes)**

- Where is "home" for you?
- If you didn't need to earn an income, what would you spend the rest of your life doing?
- What is your favorite fall memory?

\*Take a moment to discuss together any group guidelines that you would like to implement over the next 6 weeks.

#### **Check In (10 Minutes)**

- Would anyone like to share something that stood out to them during their time with God this week?
- What is something that you are thankful for from this past week?
- Take a moment to pray and ask God to lead your discussion.

#### **Learn Together (15 Minutes)**

##### **Read Nehemiah 2:1-20**

- What does King Artaxerxes notice and why?
- Why do you think it took so long for Nehemiah to express his grief?
- What 3 questions does the King ask Nehemiah?
- Where do you see wisdom and dependence on God in his response?

#### **Act On It (15 Minutes)**

- Can others easily read what you are thinking and/or feeling? Why or why not?
- How have you seen God at work in your life over the last year?
- What stood out to you the most about this week's message?
- Have you ever been afraid to ask for something? How did your faith play into that situation?
- What do you like the most about Nehemiah's character in this passage? Are any of these traits something that you would like to grow in?



**Pray Together (10 Minutes)**

As your group time closes, your group leader will give any updates or news that you might want to take note of. Then, the leader will pray for each person in the group.

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Week 2:

**Monday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 2:1-10**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 2:

**Tuesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 2:11-20**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 2:

**Wednesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 2:  
**Thursday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Acts 6:8**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 2:

**Friday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Acts 9:1-16**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 3:

**Sermon Notes**

**What stood out to me...**

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**One thing I learned about God...**

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**One thing I can apply to my life...**

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**How I'm going to pray this week...**

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Week 3:  
**Group Guide**

**Break the Ice (15 Minutes)**

- What is your favorite team sport/game to participate in?  
Favorite to watch?
- Who do you think will win the Super Bowl this year?
- Finish this statement: In the fall, I love to go \_\_\_\_\_.

**Check In (10 Minutes)**

- Would anyone like to share something that stood out to them during their time with God this week?
- Currently, what is one challenging thing happening in your life?
- Take a moment to pray and ask God to guide your discussion.

**Learn Together (15 Minutes)**

Read Nehemiah 3:1-21

- What do we learn from the fact that Nehemiah knew who worked "next to" whom?
- What does this tell you about his organization?
- What do you think Nehemiah was doing while the others were working?
- Which attitudes and actions of the people stick out to you here?

**Act On It (15 Minutes)**

- How do the ideas of team and division of labor apply to the modern-day church?
- What are the dangers of following Jesus on your own or in isolation without a team?
- Is there an area of your spiritual wall that needs rebuilding? If so, what is it?
- How can your small group get together as a team to meet a need? (Please refer to the Serving Opportunities listed at the beginning of this book.
- What stood out to you the most about this week's message and why?

**Pray Together (10 Minutes)**

As your group time closes, your group leader will give any updates or news that you might want to take note of. Have each member pair up with one other group member for contact the week for prayer and encouragement.

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Week 3:

**Monday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 3:1-16**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 3:  
**Tuesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 3:17-32**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 3:

**Wednesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 3:

**Thursday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 3:  
**Friday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 4:

**Sermon Notes**

**What stood out to me...**

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**One thing I learned about God...**

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**One thing I can apply to my life...**

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**How I'm going to pray this week...**

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## Week 4:

### Group Guide

#### Break the Ice (15 Minutes)

- What is the most challenging thing you've ever done/accomplished?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- Would you rather have more time or more money, and why?

#### Check In (10 Minutes)

- would anyone like to share something that stood out to them during their time with God this week?
- What impacted you the most from the sermon this week?
- Take a moment to pray and ask God to guide your discussion.

#### Learn Together (15 Minutes)

Read Nehemiah 4:1-23

- Why do you think Sanballat was so opposed to Nehemiah's efforts?
- What are your thoughts on verses 4-5? Are you surprised to see these words?
- How does Nehemiah encourage his people to persist in this passage?
- How does he show dependence on God?

#### Act On It (15 Minutes)

- Share about a time you faced opposition of some sort.
- Which is more difficult for you to handle: external criticism or internal fears? Why?
- What is often the biggest obstacle for you when it comes to completing a big project?
- How do you combat discouragement as you serve God?
- How can our group pray for you this week as you think about opposition you might face?

**Pray Together (10 Minutes)**

As your group time closes, your group leader will give any updates or news that you might want to take note of. Have each member pair up with one other group member for contact this week for prayer and encouragement. Then, close in prayer by asking God to help each group member face any opposition they may have to deal with this week.

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Week 4:

**Monday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1-14**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 4:

**Tuesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah4:17-32**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 4:

**Wednesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 4:

**Thursday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 5:1-11**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 4:  
**Friday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 5:12-19**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 5:

**Sermon Notes**

**What stood out to me...**

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**One thing I learned about God...**

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**One thing I can apply to my life...**

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**How I'm going to pray this week...**

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## Week 5:

### Group Guide

#### Break the Ice (15 Minutes)

- What one thing easily distracts you?
- What one fear would you like to conquer?
- What would you most like to do for someone else if you had the money and time?
- What do you think is the ideal age and why?

#### Check In (10 Minutes)

- Would anyone like to share something that stood out to them during their time with God this week?
- Share one thing that you are thankful for since beginning our journey together.
- Take a moment to pray and ask God to guide your discussion.

#### Learn Together (15 Minutes)

##### Read Nehemiah 6:1-19

- What are the final threats that Nehemiah faces?
- What do we learn about the enemy from Sanballat's tactics?
- What stands out to you the most about this passage and why?
- How do you think Nehemiah knew the letter was false?

#### Act On It (15 Minutes)

- How can focusing on a great work keep us from distraction?
- Share about a time you felt a calling from God. Did it seem too large at the time to complete? What happened?
- What do we learn about how to handle slander from Nehemiah?
- In the past, how have you handled someone speaking badly of you?
- Have you ever had trouble distinguishing between God's will and the will of others? What steps did you take to process it?

**Pray Together (10 Minutes)**

As your group time closes, your group leader will give any updates or news that you might want to take note of. Ask each member about one area of their life where they feel distracted. Then, close in prayer, reflecting on each of those needs.

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Week 5:

**Monday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 6:1-9**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 5:  
**Tuesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 6:10-19**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 5:

**Wednesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1-10**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 5:  
**Thursday S.O.A.P**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 8:11-18**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 5:  
**Friday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 9:1-15**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 6:

**Sermon Notes**

**What stood out to me...**

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**One thing I learned about God...**

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**One thing I can apply to my life...**

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**How I'm going to pray this week...**

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Week 6:  
**Group Guide**

**Break the Ice (15 Minutes)**

- What is the most ridiculous pumpkin-spiced item you've seen?
- What one goal do you hope to accomplish this year?
- What kind of business would you love to start?
- What is your favorite way to rest and relax?

**Check In (10 Minutes)**

- Would anyone like to share something that stood out to them during their time with God this week?
- When did God become more than a word to you?
- Take a moment to pray and ask God to guide your discussion.

**Learn Together (15 Minutes)**

**Read Nehemiah 13:1-22**

- What reforms does Nehemiah make in this passage? Which stands out to you the most?
- How does Nehemiah model being a godly person in these verses?
- What was the source of conflict in verse 10? Why did this offend Nehemiah?

**Act On It (15 Minutes)**

- What stood out to you the most about the message this week?
- What do your current rhythms of rest look like? After this week's message? what is one thing that you can do differently?
- What is the most important thing you learned from our study of Nehemiah?
- Is there an application you can use for your life moving forward? If so, what?
- How can our group encourage you to follow through with it?

**Pray Together (10 Minutes)**

As your group time closes, your group leader will give any updates or news that you might want to take note of. Ask each member about one area of their life where they need rest. Then, close in prayer reflecting on each of those needs.

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Week 6:

**Monday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 13:1-14**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 6:  
**Tuesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Nehemiah 13:15-31**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 6:

**Wednesday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Hebrews 4:17**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 6:

**Thursday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Hebrews 4:8-16**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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Week 6:  
**Friday S.O.A.P.**

**Scripture: Genesis 1:27-2:3**

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**Observation:**

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**Application:**

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**Prayer:**

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## **Fall Small Group Serving Opportunities**

### **Food for Kids**

- Location: Church at the Crossing
- Details: Serve as a team by packing boxes full of food that will nourish Sheperd Community students during their Fall Break from school.
- Date & Time: Sunday, October 3 after 9:45am and 11:15am services.
- How to Sign Up: Email Lauren Miller at [lmiller@golove.org](mailto:lmiller@golove.org)

### **Trunk or Treat**

- Location: Church at the Crossing
- Details: Go all out and decorate your trunk or coordinate a game for kids in our community. Your group can also help by collecting and donating candy.
- Date & Time: Friday, October 29 from 6pm-8:30pm.
- How to Sign Up: Email [kids@golove.org](mailto:kids@golove.org).

### **Shepherd Community Center**

- Opportunities: Our ministry partner, Shepherd Community Center, has many serving opportunities that are family friendly. They have needs for groups to serve in their food pantry, deliver meals to homes, and serve during the week at their academy.
- How to Sign Up: Go to <https://shepherdcommunity.org/serve/volunteer/> or email Donna at [donnaa@shepherdcommunity.org](mailto:donnaa@shepherdcommunity.org)

**Questions? Please contact Laruen Miller at [lmiller@golove.org](mailto:lmiller@golove.org)**



### **Worship Night Opportunity**

- Details: Join us for a special time of prayer and worship. We will worship together, receive prayer and encounter Jesus in a fresh, personal way!
- Date & Time: Tuesday, October 19 from 6:30 - 8:00 PM
- Location: The Haverstick

### **21 Days of Prayer & Fasting Opportunity**

- Details: Jesus demonstrated the power of God through his miracles and teaching. His power flowed out of intimacy with the Father through prayer and fasting. We can also grow in experiencing God's power and presence by stretching ourselves in prayer and fasting. As a church, we are dedicating three weeks to prayer and fasting.
- Date: September 20 - October 11
- Go to [www.golove.org/21-days-of-prayer-and-fasting](http://www.golove.org/21-days-of-prayer-and-fasting) for more information. You will find fasting plans, daily prayer prompts, a prayer guide, and more!

## References

1. Serendipity Bible: For Personal and Small Group Study.  
(1998). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House.
2. ESV.org (2001-2021). Introduction to Nehemiah.  
<https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-nehemiah/>

