



Discovering the Joy of Working Alongside of God
Lessons from the Book of Nehemiah
January 4, 2026

BIG IDEA

As a new year begins, we naturally carry hopes, goals, and longings into the future. But the book of Nehemiah reminds us that the deepest joy in life is not found in what we build for ourselves—it is found in joining God in what he is already building. God does not merely hand us dreams; he graciously invites us into his work. And when we walk alongside him, we experience joy that cannot be manufactured or sustained on our own.

Nehemiah's story shows us that God's work begins when we are honest about what is broken, courageous enough to act in obedience, and humble enough to depend on him. This joy is not the absence of hardship or opposition. In fact, it often comes through prayer, risk, sacrifice, and perseverance. Yet God allows his people to glimpse his power when they trust him together. As Ridgewood Church looks ahead, Nehemiah helps us see that God's kingdom is built through ordinary people who go "all in" together for his glory.

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 1:1-3; 2:17-20 (ESV)

"The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." (1:3)

"Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision... The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build." (2:17, 20)

MAIN THEME

Nehemiah is a Jewish exile serving a pagan king far from home. When he hears that Jerusalem's walls are broken and its people live in shame, his heart breaks. He weeps, prays, fasts, and confesses sin. The rebuilding of God's work does not begin with strategy—it begins with honest grief and dependent prayer.

God then calls Nehemiah to courageous obedience. Risking his position and even his life, Nehemiah asks the king for permission to return and rebuild. God opens the door, opposition follows, and yet God's people persevere. The wall is rebuilt in just 52 days—not



for human glory, but so that God's name would be honored again. The story of Nehemiah reminds us that God's work is done together, and the joy of working alongside him is one of his greatest gifts to his people.

DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

1. Joy Begins When We Name What's Broken and Bring It to God

Nehemiah 1:1–4; Psalm 51:17

- Why is it often difficult to be honest about what is broken in our lives or church?
- How does Nehemiah model a healthy response to brokenness?
- What does prayer reveal about what we truly care about?
- Where might God be inviting you to stop pretending and start praying?

2. Joy Is Found When We Walk Courageously in God's Will

Nehemiah 2:1–5; 2:17–20

- What risks did Nehemiah take in obeying God?
- Why does obedience often invite opposition rather than ease?
- How do prayer and action work together in Nehemiah's leadership?
- Where is God calling you to step forward with courage instead of hesitation?

3. God's Work Is Eternal—Yet He Lets Us Glimpse His Power

Nehemiah 6:15–16; Psalm 127:1

- Why do you think God allows us to occasionally see dramatic results of his work?
- What dangers come with focusing more on outcomes than on faithfulness?
- How does Nehemiah keep the focus on God's glory rather than personal success?
- When have you seen God do something clearly beyond human ability?

4. God's Work Is Always Done Together

Nehemiah 3; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; Acts 2:42–47

- What stands out to you about how the wall was rebuilt as a team effort?
- Why do you think God chooses to work through communities rather than individuals alone?
- What might God do at Ridgewood if everyone took ownership of the mission?
- Where can you personally go “all in” for the good of the church and God's kingdom?

PRAY

Dear Lord, thank you for inviting us into your work. Help us to be honest about what is broken, humble in prayer, and courageous in obedience. Guard us from fear, distraction, and division. Strengthen Ridgewood Church to walk together in unity and faith. As we move into a new year, help us trust you fully and experience the joy of working alongside you. Build what only you can build, and use our lives to bring glory to your name. Amen.



DIG DEEPER

For further study this week:

- Nehemiah 1:5-11 — A prayer rooted in God's promises
- Nehemiah 4:6-9 — Persevering through opposition
- Nehemiah 6:15-16 — God's power on display
- Psalm 127:1 — God as the true builder
- Acts 2:42-47 — God's work through a unified people

NEXT WEEK'S BIG IDEA

Christ's sacrificial death brought victory over sin!
Colossians 2:11-15

