



Normal Campus Sermon Study - 9.20.2026

Leader's Corner

Calling + Character

Nehemiah 1:4-11

Main Idea: God uses people who humbly depend on Him rather than detaching from brokenness or trying to carry it themselves.

Main Passage: Nehemiah 1:4-11

Main Practice: Bring one God-sized burden to God using Nehemiah's four movements of prayer: Relationship • Repentance • Remembrance • Request.

Leader Summary: When Nehemiah encounters a problem far bigger than himself, he neither distances himself from it nor immediately tries to fix it. He prays. His prayer reveals the humility of someone who knows the problem matters, but also knows he is not the Savior. Help your group identify what they are carrying right now and practice genuinely depending on God with it.

Prayer and Praise

Worship Suggestions:

- * "Lord, I Need You" — Matt Maher
- * "I Surrender" — Hillsong Worship
- * "Same God" — Elevation Worship

Pray Together:

God, You are great, faithful, and full of unfailing love.

We confess that we often try to carry things that were never ours to carry alone.

Forgive us for the ways we try to control, fix, avoid, or ignore what is broken.

Remind us today of who You are and what You have promised.

We give You the burdens we are carrying and ask You to show us our part.

Teach us to trust You before we act, depend on You as we act, and leave the results with You.

Jesus, You are the Savior. We are not.

We belong to You, and we need You. Amen.

Group Discussion

Read Nehemiah 1:4–11 together.

Start with the tension

1. What do you notice about what Nehemiah does—and does not do—after hearing about Jerusalem?

Nehemiah doesn't ignore the problem, but he also doesn't immediately jump into action. He sits, weeps, mourns, fasts, and prays.

2. When you encounter something painful or broken that feels bigger than you, which direction are you more likely to go? Why?

* Detached cynicism: "It's not my problem."

* Anxious activism: "It's all my problem."

* Dependence: "God, it's Yours. I'm Yours. Show me my part."

Have the group look again at verses 5–11 and identify these four movements:

RELATIONSHIP — "I acknowledge who God is."

What does Nehemiah remind himself about God before addressing the problem?

REPENTANCE — "I acknowledge who I am."

Why do you think Nehemiah says "we have sinned" rather than distancing himself from the problem?

Where might you need to ask, "How am I contributing to the brokenness I want God to change?"

REMEMBRANCE — "I remember what God has said and done."

What role does Scripture play in Nehemiah's prayer?

When life gets difficult, what truth or promise from Scripture do you find yourself returning to?

REQUEST — "I ask God for what I need."

What specifically does Nehemiah finally ask God to do?

Notice that Nehemiah asks God to work while also recognizing that God may have already positioned him to participate in the answer.

3. What burden are you carrying right now that is simply too heavy for you?

4. What would change if you genuinely believed: "I am not the Savior. Jesus is. I simply need to be faithful with my part."

Practice

Practice Together: Pray the Burden

Give everyone a couple quiet minutes.

STEP 1: Name it.

Write down one burden you are carrying that feels too big for you. Then walk individually through Nehemiah's prayer:

RELATIONSHIP

God, who are You in the middle of this?

REPENTANCE

God, is there anything in me You need to change?

REMEMBRANCE

God, what have You already said that I need to remember?

REQUEST

God, what do I need from You—and what is my part?

Then, if your group is comfortable, pair up and pray for one another. You don't need to solve the other person's burden. Simply help one another bring it before God.

Practice This Week: Pray Before You Carry

Choose one burden and pray through these four movements each day this week:

Relationship → Repentance → Remembrance → Request

End each prayer with this simple surrender: "God, it's Yours. I'm Yours. Show me my part."

Then pay attention. God may not ask you to fix everything, but He may show you one faithful step to take right where He has already placed you.

Further Study

Philippians 2:5–11 — Jesus is our ultimate picture of humility. What does His willingness to take the position of a servant teach you about dependence?

1 Peter 5:6–7 — Notice the connection Peter makes between humility and giving our worries to God. Why might refusing to release our burdens actually be an issue of humility?

Matthew 6:25–34 — What does Jesus tell us about our Father that makes dependence possible?

James 1:5 — Where do you currently need wisdom rather than simply a solution?

One thought to carry with you:

God-sized burdens should drive us to our knees before they drive us into action.