

## GBC Discipleship RESOURCE



# Renovation: Rebuilding for Purpose

## Week 03 | Inspecting Our Walls (Nehemiah 2:11-20)

*For a brief overview of why (and how) to engage in each of these practices, you can read the Guideline For Growing on our website.*

<https://www.gymeabaptist.org.au/growing/pages/guideline-for-growing>

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLESHIP MENU?

A discipleship menu is a selection of discipleship activities to engage in to continue the conversation that begins on Sunday throughout the week. The aim is to extend our interaction as a community of faith around activities that help us follow Jesus every single day. The activities vary from week to week (though there are some standard activities) and you are encouraged to do as many as you find helpful (like a menu; you don't need to eat everything on it!). Do them on your own (God and you), with a couple of friends (you and a few), or in a Life Group (you and a crew). The important thing is to do a few!

# GBC SERMON PODCAST AND THE BIG 3 PODCAST

As always, you may want to review this week's sermon and you can listen to it again on the GBC Sermon Podcast. The sermon is usually uploaded by Monday afternoon. You can also listen in to the Big 3 podcast; a weekly podcast where Matt, Jess, and Marc sit down and continue the conversation by engaging in three big questions raised by the congregation about the sermon. The Big 3 comes out on Wednesdays.

## OVERVIEW

Nehemiah's arrival in Judea is somewhat surreptitious and the new governor does not make his intentions known to the general population. It isn't until he goes on a personal tour of the walls of the city that he makes his plan known. Even the tour is somewhat on the lowdown; he goes at night with only a few people and only examines the lower city (If you imagine the city like an upside-down pear, he examines the skinny end. The bulb end was where the temple was and, we can imagine, more of the population.).

Nehemiah doesn't tell us exactly why he waited until after he had had a look at the wall, leaving it to us to speculate a bit. However, many commentators believe that he wanted to get a clear picture of the state of the wall before he began. He wanted to see for himself just how bad things were.

This willingness to take a good, hard look at the state of the wall is an important spiritual principle too. If we wish to be about the work of renovation as individuals and as a community of faith it begins by having a clear view of the work that needs to be done. This is not an easy thing to do because it involves a degree of vulnerability. Our discipleship menu this week focuses on this theme.

## DISCIPLESHIP ACTIVITIES

Vulnerability to take stock, bring that to God. God knows us. You and a few (welcome them in). Taking stock. This is an opportunity for confession. What keeps us from admitting burnt gates? Is growth and failure incompatible (not really, they are related to each other). Corporate vulnerability. Talking stock of our lives and church. What part do we play in it? Not responding with fear, but seeking understanding.

## PASSAGES TO READ

We believe that the Word of God is living and active and that reading and reflecting on it is one way we encounter God. As you read we encourage people to ask a set of simple questions: What stands out to you? What questions do you have? What is the invitation of God to you? Who can you tell?

The passages this week have been chosen as examples of biblical characters taking stock of their situation before the Lord and laying it all before him.

- Psalm 51:1-12
- Ezra 9:6-15
- Psalm 32:1-7
- Hebrews 4:12-16

## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON

These questions can be used as the basis of a small group discussion or as journal questions. As with the rest of this menu, use the questions that are most useful for you or your crew. Note: Some of these questions have been

taken and adapted from Adele Calhoun's book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (2015, IVP: Downer's Grove)

1. What are some other reasons Nehemiah may have waited to tell the people of his plans?
2. Share a time when you have had a clear view of "the trouble we are in" and have had to address it with a friend, your family, staff, board, etc. What made this conversation difficult?
3. What are some areas you believe our community of faith may need to "renovate"? What is "broken down and burnt"? How have you contributed to this situation?
4. Matt spoke about our hesitancy to be vulnerable with others. Share a time you were able to be vulnerable with someone. What made vulnerability possible? How might you foster vulnerability with others? Or as a group?

## TAKE A SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

The following questions could constitute your own "inspection of the walls" of your spiritual life and are a valuable set of questions to come back to every so often to see where progress is being made. Use these as a start or come up with your own and, like all the aspects of these menus, use the questions that are most helpful for you.

1. Where, when, and how have you joined with God's plan to make all things new?
2. What aspects of your life has Jesus been changing?
3. In what ways, by word and deed, have you invited others to follow Jesus?
4. How have you been intentional in your discipleship?
5. Where have you been generous in your life?

6. What have you learned, or what are you in the process of learning, about yourself (as a follower of Jesus) or God?
7. How have you been “the aroma of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15) to those in your life who are not believers?
8. How have you served others? How have you been served by others?

## CONFESSION

This is the most ‘risky’ of the potential tasks you can attempt this week.

James 5:16 urges us to “confession your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” Confession our failures, faults, sins, transgressions, etc. can be a very powerful experience. So often, shame lives where we have secrets and being able to speak of those things takes much of the sting out of shame. However, this requires a vulnerability that we are often not ready for.

One way to engage in this sort of practice is, like all practices, is to start small and within clear boundaries. This is discipleship task for you and few (2-3 other people, and maybe only 1) rather than a larger group.

Some valuable ground rules include:

Be prepared. Don’t spring this on others without gauging their comfort level (and yours). For example, it would be fine to start with some “simple” failures; perhaps some sins of omission (things you left undone) and have a short list prepared beforehand so you don’t have an awkward silence trying to think (or filter) of things to share. Likewise, it would be best if your spiritual friend is comfortable with hearing your confession. They don’t have to participate too, though mutual confession can be really helpful.

Confidentiality. This goes without saying, but is worth saying, nonetheless.

What is shared is meant to remain there.

Receive the confession. For the one who is hearing the confession this not the time to judge, seek to fix, or ask follow up questions (e.g., "Why did you do that? Or fail to do that?"). Confession is for the one confessing and listening with the grace that God extends to us is the most appropriate response.

Pray. It is a good practice, whenever we confess, to pray; giving thanks for the generous forgiveness available in Christ. There are also some passages that can be fruitfully shared (e.g., 1 John 1:9).

## A PRAYER TO PRAY

What are some other reasons Nehemiah may have waited to tell the people of his plans?

Share a time when you have had a clear view of "the trouble we are in" and have had to address it with a friend, your family, staff, board, etc. What made this conversation difficult?

What are some areas you believe our community of faith may need to "renovate"? What is "broken down and burnt"? How have you contributed to this situation?

Matt spoke about our hesitancy to be vulnerable with others. Share a time you were able to be vulnerable with someone. What made vulnerability possible? How might you foster vulnerability with others? Or as a group?

Note: There are a number of specific prayer points we have recommended (and you can find them in [The Long Read](#)).