**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**

Ingredients:

* Half an hour, every day.
* Quiet, so you focus on yourself and on God;
* Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, as your response to God
* Word, so you can ponder His truth
* Life, people and events, so you are aware of Him in these situations

Method:

* Time – a fixed time when you are unlikely to be interrupted is best but more important is to actually start having such a time with God.
* Quiet – A simple method is to be quiet until you are aware you are in God’s presence before you start to respond to Him.
* Word – Read and be familiar with what is said. Meditate on the Word: “What does it say?” “What does it mean?” “How should I respond?” You may use the questions to help you or set them aside.
* Life – Use the time to also be aware of the things that are happening, inside you and around you. Bring these before God and speak to Him.

# Monday and Tuesday

[**NEHEMIAH 3:1-32**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%203&version=NIV)

Remember this is your time alone with God. It is a time to tell God what is on your mind (thinking back over the past day), listen to him speak to you (reading and meditating on a bible passage), and finally, to respond to him (prayer). The questions are there to help you do this. Ignore them if they do not help. If your time is limited, I suggest that you don’t do everything in one go but spread them over the two days.

1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [NEHEMIAH 3:1-32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%203&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work. (Nehemiah 2:18)* Chapter 3 tells us in detail how the rebuilding was organised. Look at the different groups of people named. What were their professions/skills/positions? How were they qualified for the task?
2. The phrases “next to him”, “the next section”, “adjoining section” were repeated many times in this chapter. As you imagine the work being done to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, what does the picture look like to you? How was the work organised?
3. *“ … made repairs, each in front of his own house”* Some people repaired the section of the wall in front of their house, or opposite their house. These details tell us that not everyone was doing equal work, but each did what they could. How do you feel about this?
4. As you look at this picture of people working to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, you will find that some did more than others, some contributed more than others, but they were all working side-by-side, doing what each could do. What do you think of the way these people went ahead to do the needful even though they were not experienced builders ready to do a perfect job, and even though not everyone could contribute equally? Would this serve as a good model for us in building the church? There was only a small imperfection in the picture in chapter 3: what was it?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**NEHEMIAH 4:1-12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%204&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [NEHEMIAH 4:1-12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%204&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”* Who were Sanballat and Tobiah (see Nehemiah 2:19)? What were they trying to do at this point?
2. *“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. 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. So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.”* How did Nehemiah and his men respond? Is this a good way to respond to criticism and ridicule?
3. *But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.”* The enemies escalated their opposition. How did the Jews respond? Once again, is this a good way to respond to threats of violence? Is there a lack of faith in having guards to look out for trouble after having prayed?
4. *Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.” Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.” Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”* How would you describe the state of the Jews as they worked in this hostile environment? Why had they become tired and discouraged and fearful; didn’t they pray to God about the problems? How about you? Are there times when your faith, enthusiasm and strength saps away? What do you need when in such situations—a fresh plan to deal with the new situation; more prayer; take a break; encourage and look out for one another; or do something else because this cannot be God’s will?

# Friday and Saturday

[**NEHEMIAH 4:13-23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%204&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [NEHEMIAH 4:13-23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%204&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”* How did Nehemiah respond? Can this be a pattern—taking practical measures to mitigate the circumstances and renewing faith in God, in order to continue the mission—when faced with similar situations?
2. *“When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work. From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.”* How did Nehemiah describe the result? What do you think it was that frustrated the enemy?
3. *“So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.” Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.”* What do you think of working for God in such circumstances? Is this the way it should be or do you think that God would make things a lot simpler for you to accomplish his mission? Do you think this pattern of doing God’s work—being on guard against enemy attacks while doing the necessary to advance the work—should be something you consider in your service to God?
4. *“Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”* It looks like even those who are doing God’s work are not without problems. Do you think this is true or do you think God should always clear all obstacles for you? What can those who are doing God’s work expect from God? How should we approach the work God has given to us to do: pray and hope that everything will turn out well, pray and do what we can in the hope that everything will turn out well, or do the work, deal with the problems and pray only when we have run out of options?

# Sunday

##### OBSTACLES

*“So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.”*

Chapter 3 is a heartening passage. Everybody contributed what they could to the work, from priests to goldsmiths, perfume makers, people in authority; even daughters got involved. It wasn’t a question of ranking, job description, experience or even capacity; some did a lot, some just undertook to work on the wall in front of their homes; everyone worked side by side.

Into this picture of unity and industry came those who felt they were above menial tasks and supervision (some nobles), those who sought to sap their energy with criticism and ridicule, and even threats of violence. Discouragement set in and people were tired and fearful.

Nehemiah helped everyone to look to God to keep their spirits and hopes up, reminded them that they were working for a better life for their families, and got everybody involved to look out for each other as well as ensure that there were opportunities to rest.

“From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.”

This picture of the people of God working side-by-side with one hand and holding a weapon in the other perhaps can serve as a good reminder of how we should serve God in a hostile world. Even Jesus reminded us “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” We don’t serve God expecting that everything will go smoothly and easily and neither do we allow ourselves to be intimidated by opposition. We serve God because he is our God and ultimately our work will bless those we love.

*“Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”*

1. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. Read the short sharing above. Does it add anything to your own thoughts?
2. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.