

# The Hand of God

Nehemiah 2:10–20



Week Three

## inTro



Read This Week's Passage:  
Nehemiah 2:10–20

### MOVING ON

When God moves in your life, it is one thing to enjoy the experience by yourself; it is another thing to share the experience with others around you. In the story of Nehemiah, God had worked out miracles in Nehemiah's secular context to advance his religious goals. Nehemiah had received all the things that were needed to rebuild the wall. From the small details to the large logistical concerns, materials and diplomatic clearance were not only boldly requested but also astonishingly granted.

But now, more important than the project itself, Nehemiah was called to rally God's people, the people of Jerusalem, to rebuild the city walls. After years of sluggish progress, it was not only the wall that needed to be rebuilt but the confidence of the public. The testimony of the heavenly King touching the heart of the earthly king was evidence that the hand of God was upon Nehemiah. He made sure that the people heard this story and used it to encourage their faith to rebuild once again. If earthly powers were moving, how much more the heavenly powers that were behind them?



## **inScribe**

Write out Nehemiah 2:10–20 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Nehemiah 2:16–18. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline it, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you



Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases



Memorize your favorite verse. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

Are you experiencing antagonism in your life? How do you respond to antagonism from your family? What factors help you to persevere when the odds are against you?



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**NIGHT WATCH**

During the three days in Jerusalem, Nehemiah, with the utmost tact, planning, and wisdom, surveyed the walls of Jerusalem. He may have been ruminating on many questions and problems: how to obtain the support of the people, how to go about rebuilding the wall, how the resources had to be used, how to deal with potential obstacles, and so on. Instead of resting or socializing with the people, the text implies he went right to work—at night.

Rather than receiving information from secondhand sources and descriptions from others’ perspectives or depending on rumors and opinions, Nehemiah went out and looked at the condition of the walls with his own eyes. He asked questions of himself and answered them for himself conclusively.

Remarkably, Nehemiah did not tell anyone about his night watches. Nehemiah 2:12 and 16 emphasize this point. The first verse underscores that no one knew, not even any of the animals, except the one he rode on. The second verse lists the people who did not know what he was doing: the Jews, priests, nobles, officials, or others.

Possibly the honor of God and the welfare of Jerusalem worried him so much that he could not sleep. Perhaps he desired to keep his observations and conclusions to himself until the time was appropriate to share them. Regardless, it is clear that his intentions were not publicized, and this wise act prevented enemies from knowing what was going on.

In the emphatic context of Nehemiah being alone, verse 12 does also state that a “few men” were with him. Although he was discrete and kept his information confidential, apparently Nehemiah did keep a couple of trusted assistants with him.

## PEOPLE-PEOPLE VERSUS PROJECT-PEOPLE

There are two styles of leadership. One is project-focused while the other is people-focused. The former is into plans, deadlines, tasks, and objectives while the latter is into relationships, teams, and spirit. Up to this point, Nehemiah has shown his competence in the former. This week's passage looks at his pivot toward the latter.

Instead of using the words I, my, and you, Nehemiah uses the words we and us in Nehemiah 2:17, 18. He identifies with the people, expressing sympathies and eliciting their shame for the deplorable condition of the walls. He does not complain and accuse them of indolence and indifference but suggests, rather, an initiative to rebuild. People are easily discouraged, but Nehemiah provides encouraging words of consideration, news of the king's support, and the promise of God's blessings. Inspiring people is as hard a task for a leader as are visioning and planning for a project. However, working with people has its own set of challenges.

Leadership is not relegated to the theoretical or abstract; it affects people's lives. Some of these lives can react adversely to the vision. Immediately after inspiring the people with his testimony, Nehemiah faces opposition. Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, and Tobiah, the governor of Ammon, team up with Geshem, the confederate leader of the Arabian tribes. Their first response was laughter, mocking the divine initiative. Their second response was scorn, insinuating ulterior motives in Nehemiah's leadership.

Two antagonists are identified in verse 10, Sanballat and Tobiah. But in verse 19, a third party has joined them. Sanballat hails from the north; Tobiah the Ammonite is rooted in the east; and Geshem, of the Arab tribes, is from the south of Jerusalem. The oppositional trio was essentially saying their reigns from the north, south, and east of Jerusalem should have an influence over the future of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah did not defend himself or respond to their accusations. He simply claimed God as his benefactor and discredited their claims upon the region of Judah (verse 20). Those opposing our visions may very well have logical and rational reasons, but godly leaders persevere with their visions without getting distracted by pointless argumentation.

Nehemiah shows courage in counteracting the accusations of the three states around him. His courage stems from his assurance of God's ownership and stake in the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah did not become a people pleaser but, in the integrity of his character, stayed his course. Biblical leadership is never afraid of failure and never anxious of losing position but always fixed on the reputation of God, the promises of God, and the power of God.



**in**Terpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?



Read more at  
[www.inverseible.org/neh3-4](http://www.inverseible.org/neh3-4)



What relationship do the following verses have with Nehemiah 2:10–20?

Prov. 6:6–8

Prov. 16:9

Luke 14:28–33



What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Nehemiah 2:10–20?

Review your memorized verse from Nehemiah 2:10–20.

## THE INVISIBLE HAND

In the writings of the Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith, the concept of an invisible hand is used to describe the capitalistic interplay of the individual with larger society. The harder an individual works for self-motivated interests, the more the economy as a whole benefits. This is one of the underlying principles of laissez-faire economics that modern societies are generally based on. Though the complexity of economics makes causes and effects appear to be random, Smith argues that “it” essentially works, attributing it to an invisible hand.

Correspondingly, the complexity of life overshadows the complexity of economics. And if an invisible hand is used to describe economic applications, a divine hand indeed can be used to describe spiritual ones, especially if things just “happen” to work out.

Nehemiah 2 references a divine hand in verses 8 and 18. In both cases, the hand is described as good and works through the power of the king. Both good and powerful, it represents the providence of God working out His will in our lives. It takes a certain discernment to view the outworking of heaven in everyday situations, whether they be secular or spiritual. This hand represents the all-seeing omniscience of God being able to do anything in His omnipotence. Though He is not blatantly present in the passage, His workings can be seen through special circumstances. Likewise, though He may not seem blatantly apparent in our lives, His workings can be seen through spiritual discernment and the unusual blessings in our lives.



**inVite**

Meditate on Nehemiah 2:10-20 again and look for Jesus in the passage.



Could Nehemiah have accomplished his goals without Christ's aid?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at  
[www.inverseible.org/neh3-6](http://www.inverseible.org/neh3-6)



Review your memory verse.  
How does it apply to your  
life this week?

—————→  
As you have studied this  
week, what personal  
applications have you been  
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications  
you must make in your school,  
family, workplace, and church?



Read more inSight from the  
Spirit of Prophecy at  
[www.inverseible.org/neh3-7](http://www.inverseible.org/neh3-7)

**PREPARING THE PITCH**

“The royal letters to the governors of the provinces along his route, secured to Nehemiah an honorable reception and prompt assistance. And no enemy dared molest the official who was guarded by the power of the Persian king and treated with marked consideration by the provincial rulers. Nehemiah’s journey was safe and prosperous.

“His arrival at Jerusalem, however, with the attendance of a military guard, showing that he had come on some important mission, excited the jealousy and hatred of the enemies of Israel. . . .

“Nehemiah continued to exercise the same caution and prudence that had hitherto marked his course. Knowing that bitter and determined enemies stood ready to oppose every effort for the restoration of Jerusalem, he concealed the nature of his mission until a study of the situation had enabled him to form his plans. Thus he was prepared to secure the cooperation of the people, and set them at work before his enemies had opportunity to arouse their fears or their prejudice.

“Nehemiah had been highly honored of God, and had been entrusted with great responsibilities; but he did not, because of this, presume to act in an independent, self-sufficient manner. He selected a few persons whom he knew to be worthy of confidence, and to them he made known the circumstances that had led to his visit to Jerusalem, the object to be accomplished, and the plans that he purposed to employ. Thus he secured their assistance in his important undertaking. . . .

“In secrecy and silence, Nehemiah completed his circuit of the walls. . . . In this painful survey he did not wish to attract the attention of either friends or foes, lest an excitement should be created, and reports be put in circulation that might defeat, or at least hinder, his work.”<sup>1</sup>

“Although Nehemiah bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to co-operate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, he chose not to depend upon the mere exercise of authority. He sought rather to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people, well knowing that a union of hearts as well as hands was essential to success in the great work which he had undertaken. When he called the people together on the morrow, he presented such arguments as were calculated to arouse their dormant energies and to unite their scattered numbers. . . .

“There is need of Nehemiahs in the church today,—not men who can pray and preach only, but men whose prayers and sermons are braced with firm and eager purpose. . . . The success attending Nehemiah’s efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish. Living faith will prompt to energetic action. The spirit manifested by the leader will be, to a great extent, reflected by the people.”<sup>2</sup>

1. Ellen G. White, “A Night of Preparation,” *Southern Watchman*, March 22, 1904.  
2. Ellen G. White, “Securing the Co-operation of the People,” *Southern Watchman*, March 29, 1904.



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



What experiences has God given you that you have already shared with others to encourage them?

What experiences has God given you that you have not shared with others? Why have you not shared?

What is the danger of only believing another's report of a situation?

What principles of witnessing and tact can we learn from Nehemiah's experience?

What are the principles of biblical leadership for eliciting people's support?

What are the principles of leadership in handling opposition?

What walls in your life need rebuilding?

How does one balance the emphasis between the people and the project?