

**Faith Bible Study Guide**  
**For the Week of June 28, 2026**  
**5th Sunday in Pentecost**  
**“Choose Your Own Adventure: Origin Stories”**  
**- NEHEMIAH-**



**Be still [2 Minutes]:** As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

**CENTERING WORDS/ WORDS TO PONDER:**

*"The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building." (Nehemiah 2:20)*

**OPENING PRAYER:**

*Gracious and faithful God,*

*You are the God who rebuilds broken places and restores weary hearts. You see the ruins we try to hide, the walls that have crumbled around our lives, our communities, and our world.*

*As we study your Word today, give us the courage of Nehemiah. Open our eyes to see what needs rebuilding. Open our ears to hear your call. Open our hearts to trust that you have already gone before us. May your Spirit guide our conversation so that we not only learn more about Scripture but become people who live it. Build us into a community of hope. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

**Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]**

1. Take a breath. Feel your body in the chair. How is it with your soul today?

Take a few moments to answer one or two of these questions.

2. Looking Back
  - Where have you seen God at work this week?
  - What has brought you joy recently?
  - What has felt heavy or discouraging?
3. Looking Within
  - Have you ever felt God nudging you toward something difficult?
  - Is there a "wall" in your own life that feels broken right now?

- What keeps you from taking the first step when you know something needs to change?
4. Looking Ahead
- What gives you hope these days?
  - Where do you sense God inviting you to participate in something bigger than yourself?

**Be the Word:** Scripture Lesson: Nehemiah 2:1-20

<sup>1</sup> In the month of Nisan,<sup>[a]</sup> in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, the king was about to be served wine. I took the wine and gave it to the king. Since I had never seemed sad in his presence, <sup>2</sup> the king asked me, “Why do you seem sad? Since you aren’t sick, you must have a broken heart!”

I was very afraid <sup>3</sup> and replied, “May the king live forever! Why shouldn’t I seem sad when the city, the place of my family’s graves, is in ruins and its gates destroyed by fire?”

<sup>4</sup> The king asked, “What is it that you need?”

I prayed to the God of heaven <sup>5</sup> and replied, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, please send me to Judah, to the city of my family’s graves so that I may rebuild it.”

<sup>6</sup> With the queen sitting beside him, the king asked me, “How long will you be away and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I told him how long I would be gone.

<sup>7</sup> I also said to him, “If it pleases the king, may letters be given me addressed to the governors of the province Beyond the River to allow me to travel to Judah. <sup>8</sup> May the king also issue a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, directing him to supply me with timber for the beams of the temple fortress gates, for the city wall, and for the house in which I will live.”

The king gave me what I asked, for the gracious power of my God was with me.

**Inspecting Jerusalem**

<sup>9</sup> So I went to the governors of the province<sup>[b]</sup> Beyond the River and gave them the king’s letters. The king had sent officers of the army and cavalry with me.

<sup>10</sup> When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, they were very angry that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

<sup>11</sup> When I reached Jerusalem and had been there for three days, <sup>12</sup> I set out at night, taking only a few people with me. I didn’t tell anyone what my God was prompting me to do for Jerusalem, and the only animal I took was the one I rode. <sup>13</sup> I went out by night through the Valley Gate past the Dragon’s Spring to the Dung Gate so that I could inspect the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down, as well as its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

<sup>14</sup> Then I went on to the Spring Gate and to the King’s Pool. Since there was no room for the animal on which I was riding to pass, <sup>15</sup> I went up by way of the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I turned back and returned by entering through the Valley Gate.

## Let's rebuild

<sup>16</sup> The officials didn't know where I had gone or what I was doing. I hadn't yet told the Jews, the priests, the officials, the officers, or the rest who were to do the work. <sup>17</sup> So I said to them, "You see the trouble that we're in: Jerusalem is in ruins, and its gates are destroyed by fire! Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we won't continue to be in disgrace." <sup>18</sup> I told them that my God had taken care of me, and also told them what the king had said to me.

"Let's start rebuilding!" they said, and they eagerly began the work.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>19</sup> But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and made fun of us. "What are you doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"

<sup>20</sup> "The God of heaven will give us success!" I replied. "As God's servants, we will start building. But you will have no share, right, or claim in Jerusalem."

*L: The Word of God for ALL People.*

*P: Thanks be to God.*

## **Be rooted: [Bible Study]**

### **Exegesis & Commentary: Historical Setting**

Nehemiah lived during the Persian Empire around **445 BCE**, nearly 140 years after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Although many Jewish people had returned home after the exile, Jerusalem remained vulnerable.

Its walls still lay in ruins. Its gates had been burned. The city had become a symbol of shame rather than hope. Nehemiah served as the **cupbearer** to King Artaxerxes I. This wasn't simply a servant's job.

The cupbearer tasted the king's food and wine to protect against assassination, making him one of the most trusted officials in the kingdom. He had direct access to the king and significant political influence. Yet despite living comfortably in Persia, Nehemiah's heart remained with God's people.

---

### **Verse 1–8: Courage Requires Risk**

Nehemiah appears sad before the king.

That may not sound unusual, but in Persian culture it was dangerous. Royal servants were expected to project happiness in the king's presence. Appearing distressed could be interpreted as disrespect—or even disloyalty.

Nehemiah admits: "I was very much afraid."

Faith is not the absence of fear. Faith is choosing obedience while afraid. Notice something beautiful: Before Nehemiah answers the king... he prays. Not a long prayer. Probably only seconds. A whispered prayer.

One commentator calls this "arrow prayers"—quick prayers shot toward heaven in moments of need. Nehemiah had spent months praying (Chapter 1), and those long seasons of prayer prepared him for this brief moment of courage.

### **Verse 9–16: Vision Begins with Listening**

Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem. He doesn't immediately make speeches. He doesn't announce a building campaign. He doesn't rush into leadership. Instead...he waits. Three days. Then he quietly surveys the damage at night. Leadership begins with observation before action. Notice that Nehemiah doesn't ignore reality. He doesn't pretend everything is fine. Hope is never denial. Biblical hope looks honestly at brokenness while believing God can restore it.

### **Verse 17–18: From "I" to "We"**

Nehemiah finally speaks. Notice his language. He doesn't say: "Your walls." He says: "The trouble **we** are in." Healthy leadership creates shared ownership. The rebuilding isn't Nehemiah's project. It becomes the community's calling. Their response is immediate: "Let us start building." One person's courage becomes a community's movement.

### **Verse 19–20: Expect Resistance**

The names Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem appear repeatedly throughout Nehemiah. Every movement toward God's future encounters resistance. The opposition mocks. Ridicules. Questions motives. But Nehemiah never argues. He simply points back to God. "The God of heaven will give us success." His confidence isn't in the size of the project. It is in the faithfulness of God.

**What do walls represent?** Ancient city walls were not merely military structures. They represented:

- Safety
- Identity
- Community
- Stability
- Belonging

Without walls, a city remained vulnerable. Today our "walls" may not be made of stone.

Perhaps they include:

- Broken relationships
- Community division
- Loneliness
- Injustice
- Racism
- Poverty
- Fear
- Spiritual exhaustion

God continues calling people to rebuild.

---

### **A Leadership Lesson**

Nehemiah demonstrates remarkable leadership. Notice his progression: He prays. He plans. He listens. He surveys. He gathers people. He inspires. He shares ownership. He trusts God. Too often we reverse the order. We act first. Pray later. Nehemiah reminds us that faithful leadership begins with spiritual discernment.

## The Theology of Restoration

Throughout Scripture, God is continually rebuilding. After the Flood... God rebuilds creation. After slavery... God rebuilds Israel. After exile... God rebuilds Jerusalem. After the Cross... God rebuilds humanity.

Ultimately, Scripture ends not with escape from earth but with the New Jerusalem—a restored city where God dwells with humanity (Revelation 21). God is always in the restoration business. The question is whether we will join God's work.

---

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text

1. Why do you think Nehemiah was willing to risk his position before the king?
2. What does Nehemiah's brief prayer teach us about prayer in everyday life?
3. Why do you think Nehemiah waited before speaking to the people?
4. What leadership qualities stand out most to you?

### Reflecting Personally

5. What "walls" in your own life need rebuilding?
6. Have you ever sensed God inviting you to something that seemed impossible?
7. When have you experienced opposition while trying to do something good?
8. How do you usually respond to criticism?

### Reflecting as a Church

9. What "walls" in our church or community need rebuilding?
  10. What strengths has God already given our congregation for this work?
  11. Who in our community may be waiting for someone to invite them into God's rebuilding work?
  12. What does "Rise up and build" look like for Faith today?
- 

## Closing Reflection

Nehemiah reminds us that rebuilding always begins with one person who is willing to care. One prayer. One conversation. One act of courage. One brick.

The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt because ordinary people believed God could do extraordinary things through them. The same is true today. God is still asking: **Who will rise up and build?**

### **Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]**

### Building One Brick at a Time

Nehemiah didn't rebuild Jerusalem by himself. Everyone picked up a section of the wall. God rarely asks us to rebuild everything. God asks us to be faithful with our piece.

### This Week's Challenge

Choose one area where you can help rebuild.

Perhaps...

### **At Home**

- Begin a difficult but healing conversation.
- Offer forgiveness.
- Encourage someone who feels discouraged.

### **In the Church**

- Volunteer in a ministry.
- Invite someone new to worship.
- Pray intentionally for church leadership and vision.
- Ask, "Where can I help build?"

### **In the Community**

- Support a local food pantry or mutual aid effort.
- Write an encouraging note to a teacher, first responder, or community leader.
- Learn about a justice issue affecting your neighbors and take one concrete step toward advocacy.
- Practice being a bridge-builder across differences by listening with humility and compassion.

### **Reflection for the Week**

Each evening ask yourself:

- Where did I notice brokenness today?
- Where did I notice God already rebuilding?
- What brick did I help lay today?

### **Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:**



# We lift up prayers for all of God's Creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.

## continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Rev. Alan Mark	Frankie Montoya	Kaitlyn Sabedra	Patty Kobayashi
Alice Kajiya	Rev. Gary Williams	Karlynn Fernandez	Priscilla Kandel
Ally Kubo	Geri Shiraki	Kay Saxton	Rachel Delgado
Alvena & Tom Fukuhara	Glenn & Millie	Kian Tehrani	Raquel M.Martinez
Amy Higa	Shimizu	Kiki Hashimoto	Rose Ellison
Anthony Anderson, Sr.	Gordon Mark	Rev. Kim Montenegro	Ron Hamaguchi
Apolosi Lokotui	Grace Tochiara	Kelsey DeGracia	Rick Katsuki
Austin Maeda	Grant Hanada	Kenny Medeiros	Ruth Hirata
Barbara Tamura	Harriet Tateyama	Kyle Ichikawa	Ruth Taira
Betty Kobata	Haru Yasunaga	Larry Takumi	Sandra Minjarez-Grange
Bill Morris	Harry Manaka,	Layne Nakasone	Stan Miyasato
Brian Okumura	Sansei Rocker	Linda Jung	Steph Matsunaga
Cami Bruns	Harry & Ruth	Liz Harner	Sue Hamada
Christine Keim	Takaki	Lucas Yniguez	Sue Hasegawa
Claretta Foster	Hisako Shohara	Marion Antoku	Susan Mizuki
Cory Williams	Ingrid Peterson	Maddie Sakurai-Lopez	Susan Slade
Dan Segawa	Irene Munesato	Mae Nakakihara	Takai Finau
Dan Yamashita	Jack Honda	Mary Jung	Tina Arguello
Deron Tokishi	Jacqueline Wong	Mary & Bob Keily (siblings)	Tommy Sakaguchi
Debbie Uyeshima Dillard	Jan Tanabe	Mary Marchand	Tseyli Mantooth
Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda	Jayne Watanabe	Mary Tamura	V'hraniku & Shaun Haynes
Dr. DoAnn Tsuneo Kaneko	Jehiel Vinluan	Maxine Butcher	Victoria DelaTorre
Elaine Yoshida	Jennie Shitakubo	Rev. Mike Hiranuma	Vincent Gomez
Eleanor Nagai	Joanne Sato	Miyoko Ahn	Wailana Bulkley
Ernie Santiago	Joelle Peelgreen	Mutsuko Nishi	Walker Wilkerson
Faith Tanaka	Jordan Sasaki	Nancy Matsushima	Whitney Nakayama
Florence Nakakura	Joyce Matsubara	Noah Miyagawa-Sue	Winnie Osaki
Frank Sato	Joye Barker	Oscar Phillip Bland Jr.	Yukio Inouye
	Julie Inouye	Pam Fink	
	Juliet Koyanagi		

## those in Community Living & Homecare

- Doris Kato
- Emma Horiuchi
- Faith Tanaka
- Rev. Harry Fujimoto
- Irene & Tak Ryono
- Jane Kiyohara
- Marion Antoku
- Mary Jung
- Nobie Shiokari
- Ruth Hirata
- Sets Asano
- Sue Hasegawa
- Jennie Shitakubo
- Fred Oshiro
- Audrey Goto

## for our Worldwide Community

### for the Leadership of our Country and our Churches

### for the immigrants: migrants, refugees, asylees

### for our siblings in Christ who struggle and in need of God's care

### for those who live in through wars, unrest, and violence

### for those suffering and rebuilding after national disasters and man-made catastrophes

## for All Our Saints

The Miyake family, on the passing of Chieko "Chic" Mliyake (June 15, 2026)

Dave & Helen Wada and family, on the passing of Helen's mother, Kazuko Maruyama (4/10/26)

The Yasunaga family, on the passing of Harue Yasunaga (5/29/26)

The Shimizu family, on the passing of Wayne Shimizu

UPDATED 6.26.2026

## Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:

- Mary Tamura turned 102 (June 22)
- Graduations & Milestones
- V'hraniku & Shaun Haynes - Maliyah Joi born, (6/21)

## For healing and recovery

### Church Members:

- Ramsay Higa

- Vincent Gomez (Klinger family friend)

- Wailana Bulkley (Rhonda's friend)
- Cory Williams (Karen Matsuyama's friend)
- Eleanor Ngai (Julie's cousin)
- Joyce Matsubara
- Julie Inouye (surgery pending)
- Jennie Shitakubo
- Ally Kubo (4/17 - surgery)
- Jan Tanabe
- Christine Bone
- Audrey Goto
- Alice Kajiya
- Larry Takumi
- Harriet Tateyama
- Chic Miyake
- Pam Fink (recovery)

### **Community:**

- Patti (spinal cord surgery; Patty's sister-in-law)
- Debbie Uyeshima Dillard (Susan's friend; thyroid cancer)
- Lyle (Alan's friend)
- Beatrix & Daniel (Julie's friend)
- Kaitlyn Sabedra
- First Lady Racelder Grandberry Trimble
- Rev. Gary Bernard Williams
- Jeanette Davis (Rhonda Benware's mother)
- Dave Delgado's family (mom, aunts, sister)
- Andie Montoya's Mom
- Mary & Bob Kiely (siblings of Ann Kiely)
- Tseyli Mantooth
- Kim Foster & Claretta Foster

### **Traveling Mercies:**

- Donna & Darrell Iki

### **World Concerns:**

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government and leadership (all of them); restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...
- War-torn countries, THE MIDDLE EAST, PALESTINE, SYRIA, IRAN, LEBANON, UKRAINE, SUDAN, MEXICO, VENEZUELA around the world...
  - Natural disasters around the world...
  - Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections...
  - Health Care system
  - The homeless and impoverished
  - Leadership (including clergy)
  - Tom Hoang (free! MAY 17th at Faith)
  - Mass Shootings (Shreveport)

- Destiny & Diane Ueda-Banda
- Victoria DelaTorre
- Alvena Fukuhara & Tom
- Harry & Ruth Takaki
- Mae Nakakihara
- Mary Tamura
- Jan Tanabe
- Dan Yamashita
- Kenny Medeiros
- Frank Sato
- The Shimizus
- Winnie Osaki
- Nancy Matsushima
- Mary Tamura
- Ruth Hirata
- Faith Tanaka
- Irene & Tak Ryono
- Nobie Shiokari

- Walker Wilkerson
- Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki -friend)
- Rev's friends: Stan Miyasato, Mari'a Cleverly, (Norma, Ashley)
- Raquel Martinez (Julie's goddaughter)
- Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster)
- Douglas Higa (Lynne Vinluan's dad)
- Jehiel Vinluan
- Apolosi Lokotui
- Rev. Alan Mark
- Gordon Mark
- Jackie Wong
  - Those who are HOMEBOUND

- The U.S. Military
- All of God's children
- May - Mental Health Month; AANHPI Month
  - Care for families (impact)
  - Food insecurity
- Ebola Virus outbreak (continent of Africa)
- Earthquake in the Philippines & Venezuela
- Graduates

**Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord**

- Hisako Shohara (Jane Matsumoto's mother)
- Chieko "Chic" Miyake (6/15)
- Harue Yasunaga (5/22)
- Kazuko Maruyama (4/10); Kyle Wada's Grandmother, Helen Wada's mother
- Jeff Corey

**And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing**

Faithful God,

Thank you for calling ordinary people into extraordinary work. Like Nehemiah, help us to notice the places where your world is hurting—not so that we become overwhelmed, but so that we may become faithful.

Give us eyes to see the broken walls around us, courage to take the first step, wisdom to pray before we act, and perseverance when we face resistance.

Teach us that rebuilding is not about accomplishing everything ourselves, but about joining your work alongside others. Help us to trust that every act of compassion, every word of justice, every gesture of reconciliation, and every step of faith becomes another stone in the kingdom you are building.

As we leave this place, remind us that you are the God who restores ruins, renews hope, and makes all things new. Send us out to rise up and build—not for our own glory, but so that our neighbors may see your love made visible in our lives.

Through Christ, our Cornerstone and our Peace, we pray.

Amen.