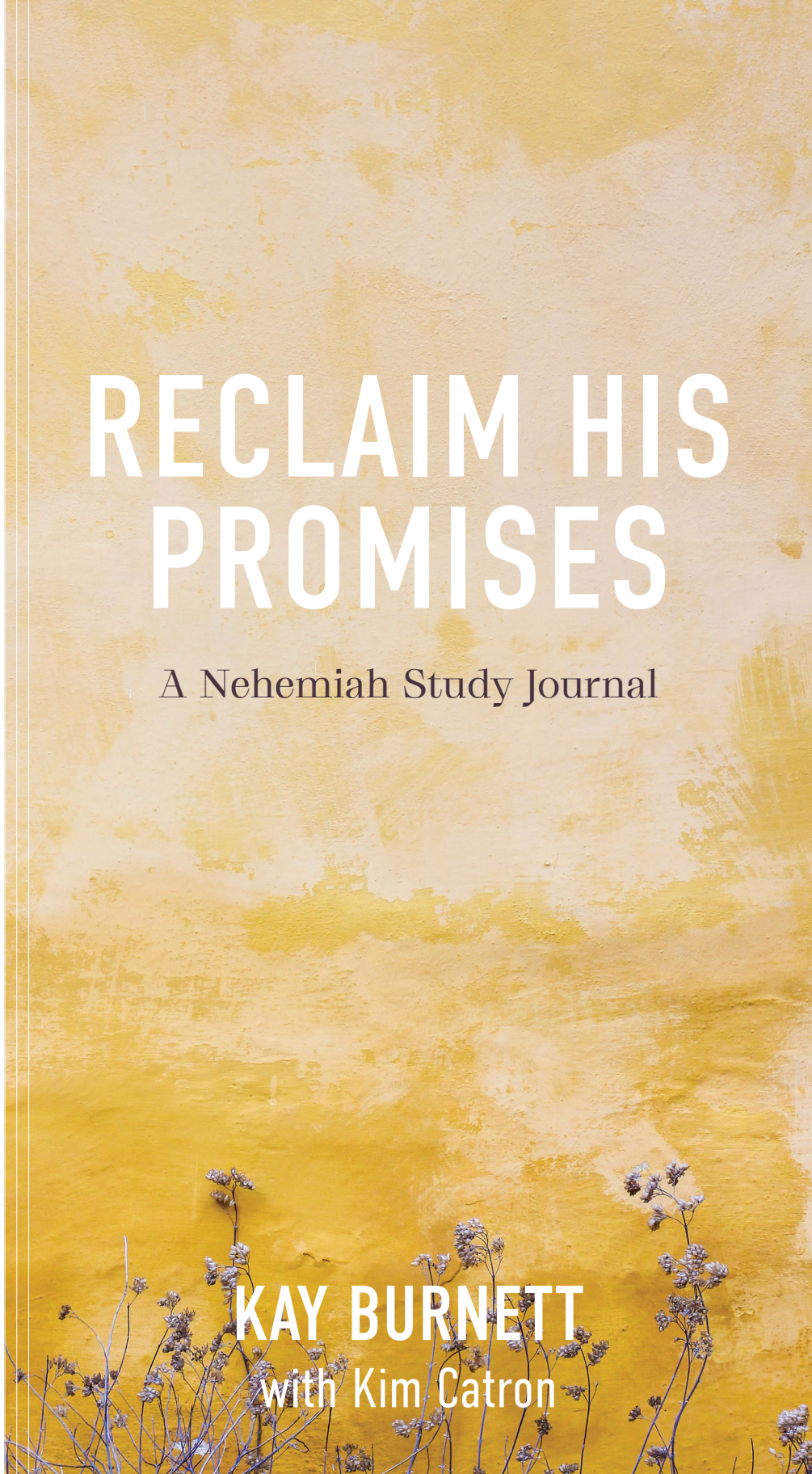


NEHEMIAH

RECLAIM HIS PROMISES

A Nehemiah Study Journal

KAY BURNETT
with Kim Catron



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Introduction to Nehemiah

OLD TESTAMENT BOOK WRITTEN BY NEHEMIAH
AND/OR EZRA

Focus: Shares the journey of a man who led his people to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and brought stability after the Exile.

Background: In the year 445 BC, Nehemiah, a Jewish man, lived in the palace of the Persian king Artaxerxes I, and served as the king's trusted cupbearer—an important and influential position in the ancient Near East.

So, how did this Israelite man become the cupbearer to a Persian king? Almost 150 years earlier, the southern nation of Judah had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Most of the people were taken into captivity. A thousand years before Nehemiah, Moses had warned the Jewish people about this when they entered the Promised Land for the first time:

“Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster. For I command you this day to love the LORD your God and to keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you and the land you are about to enter and occupy.”

“But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live a long, good life in the land you are crossing the Jordan to occupy.”

Deuteronomy 30:15–18

Over the centuries, God sent many prophets with the same sobering warning. The descendants of Abraham, however, refused to listen. So, they became exiles, banished far away from the Promised Land God had given them. Nehemiah's family was possibly among those deported.

Almost fifty years after the Babylonians took Jewish people into captivity, Babylon was captured by the armies of the Medes and the Persians. This is how Nehemiah came to live in a Persian palace.

Our reading begins with Nehemiah's response to some troubling news. He learned that the holy city of Jerusalem where his ancestors had worshipped was vulnerable and defenseless. Decades after its destruction by the Babylonians, much of Jerusalem was still in ruins. Nehemiah's response to the account of the holy city's pitiful state showed the depth of his love and devotion for his people and for his homeland.

Amazingly, the Persian king he served gave Nehemiah permission to return to Jerusalem with full authority to rebuild the city walls. Later, the king appointed him as governor for the region.

Throughout this study, you'll witness how Nehemiah led the Jewish people through various challenges. And at every turn he faithfully reached out to God in prayer. He organized a major restoration project and saw its completion in fifty-two days. During those days, he faced opposition and threats from neighboring enemies and dealt with problems within the Israelite ranks. Through it all, Nehemiah constantly offered consolation to his people. And when the wall was finally completed, he led his fellow Jews in a public celebration of victory.

The Book of Nehemiah is only thirteen chapters and filled with teachable moments and life-impacting truths. In its pages, you'll encounter sacrifice and social reform. You'll see such themes as overcoming and reclaiming. These themes still speak to the human condition and can apply to us today.

Some Scripture passages contain details, lists, and names. These passages can feel obscure, but don't be tempted to skim through them!



Remember, all Scripture is God-breathed and can teach us something. Some days, what you read may offer a small nugget of truth. Other days, you may run out of space to write down all the revelation you find. Every truth you glean is valuable. For the readings that may require more effort to find insight, we are providing an example—a nugget of truth—to help guide you. If you see something else, write about that as well. The Holy Spirit is our Counselor and Guide. Trust Him to bring each passage to life.

As you begin the study of Nehemiah, ask the Holy Spirit to show you insights into your own life. Look for familiar human responses throughout the book that might relate to your circumstances.

- » *What convicts you?*
- » *What inspires you?*
- » *What disappoints or encourages you?*
- » *What breaks your heart?*

Journal your responses to these and other questions as you listen for God's voice, capturing what He says to you, just the way you hear it.

May this study help you experience the power of the Word of God to teach, correct, encourage, inspire, and empower you with wisdom for your journey.



WEEK 1

Prayer, Preparation, and Progress

*They replied at once, “Yes, let’s rebuild the wall!”
So they began the good work.*

Nehemiah 2:18



ENGAGE

Have you ever trusted someone so much you couldn't imagine that anyone could replace them? Maybe you had a trusted coworker with whom you discussed all of your ideas and frustrations. Or perhaps you had a baby-sitter who loved your kids and always took great care of them. Or maybe a medical doctor walked with you through a long and difficult journey.

What did you do when that person got a promotion, decided to go back to school, or wanted to spend more time with their family? You, of course, thought about how irreplaceable they seemed to you. But how could you hold back someone who had meant so much to you? The king possibly felt like this when he heard Nehemiah's request.

CONSIDER

Nehemiah, as cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes I, held a position of great honor and trust. It was his duty to pour beverages and serve them at the royal table. The cupbearer was also sometimes required to test a beverage before serving it. After all, it wasn't uncommon for the enemies of ancient kings to attempt to poison them.

But then one of Nehemiah's brothers, Hanani, brought devastating news that their beloved holy city was in ruins. Nehemiah was heartbroken by Hanani's report of the condition of Jerusalem. He felt he needed to go on a mission to rebuild the wall of the holy city before it was completely destroyed. Nehemiah was so pressed by this need that he was willing to risk asking the king for a leave of absence.

But first, Nehemiah spent necessary time seeking God's wisdom and strength. Four months passed after he heard about Jerusalem's broken-down status. He certainly didn't display a rash response to a crisis. He took the time to think it through, bathe his idea in prayer, and be certain God was leading him to take a giant step of faith.

Nehemiah fasted and prayed, crying out to the God he loved and faithfully served. God had broken Nehemiah's heart over the tragic ruin of Jerusalem. His response was a beautiful picture of a leader's worship and surrender.

God often brings deep grief to those He calls to lead and minister during times of crisis. The grief can flow from despair over sinfulness or the tangible needs of others. Grief and motivation can flow from a Holy Spirit-driven desire to honor God, help others, or both.

God raises up His people for specific assignments and stirs their hearts with a passion to be a part of the solution. I love knowing I don't have to work through my own power to step into God's assignments. He incredibly promises to help us have both the desire and the strength to obey His requests.

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Philippians 2:13



What the Bible Says

READ: NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

These are the memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah.

In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire."

When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. Then I said,

"O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

"Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.'

"The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me."

In those days I was the king's cup-bearer.





REFLECT



Focus Verses:
Nehemiah 1:5–6

Highlight or write out the Focus Verses or the one that impacted you the most.

Look

What do you notice about this passage? Consider responses to these questions: Who, what, where, when, why, and how? Is anything repeated? What is the text saying in simple terms?



Learn

What does this passage mean? What is the author trying to communicate? In the simplest terms, write your understanding of its meaning.

Live

How does this passage connect with your everyday life? Is God speaking something specifically to you through this passage?



Listen to God

Prayerfully reflect on this passage. Write down your prayer regarding what you've learned today. Ask for God's help to obey His instructions. Include anything else that's on your heart today. Thank Him for the power and truth of His Word.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Kay Burnett

Church-planter, credentialed minister, and the national director of AG Women since 2016, Kay is passionate about the Word, spending time with Jesus, and influencing others to know and love Him more. Her greatest joy is spending time with her husband, Jim, their kids, and grandkids.



Kim Catron

Kim Catron, M.Ed, is a teacher, credentialed minister, mentor, and writer. She and her husband, Jon, have been in ministry together for twenty-six years. Currently, she serves as an associate pastor at Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri, and Adult Curriculum team lead for Bible Engagement Project. She says, “Anywhere my husband and adult kids are is my favorite place to be!”



Do you ever open your Bible and feel like you don't know where to start?

You're not alone! Lots of people feel like they don't have enough time or knowledge to study the Bible the "right" way.

That's why this study is designed to make it simple for everyone to engage with God's Word.

Reclaim His Promises will help you unpack and apply the life-impacting truths found in the story of Nehemiah. This study journal provides a simple model for you to engage with God's Word. Reading each daily passage, you'll consider its original context and then reflect on what God is saying to you.

Throughout Nehemiah's thirteen chapters, you'll discover themes like these that still speak to us today:

- Trusting God in all circumstances
- Committing our work to Him
- Allowing God to restore our broken life
- Discovering how doing things God's way brings joy and strength

Through engaging Scripture readings and guided journaling, you'll gain the confidence you need to get into the Bible and hear God's voice through His Word.

Are you ready? Then let's get started!

FEATURES:

Journal through the Book of Nehemiah in six weeks on your own or with a group.

- **Five Scripture readings per week**
- **Daily journaling prompts**
- **Weekly reflection and discussion questions for group study**

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