

Visions of Restoration

Discipleship Cycles in Nehemiah

A "discipleship cycle" (or d-cycle) is a practice of hearing from Creator's word, applying it in our lives, and then learning from our experience together.

Part 1: Naming What's Broken

Story: Creator's vision and yours

What do you see in the picture?

How does it relate to your story?

What healing do you want to see happen in your and your community's story?



Read Nehemiah 1:1-2:10

Where do you see brokenness in Nehemiah's story?

How does Creator work to bring healing to Nehemiah and his people?

Nehemiah 1:1-2:10
New Living Translation (NLT)

1:1 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. ² 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.

³ 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."

⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ 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, ⁶ 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! ⁷ We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

⁸ "Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. ⁹ 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.'

¹⁰ "The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants. ¹¹ 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.

^{2:1} Early the following spring, in the month of Nisan,[d] during the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was serving the king his wine. I had never before appeared sad in his presence. ² So the king asked me, "Why are you looking so sad? You don't look sick to me. You must be deeply troubled."

Then I was terrified, ³ but I replied, "Long live the king! How can I not be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been destroyed by fire."

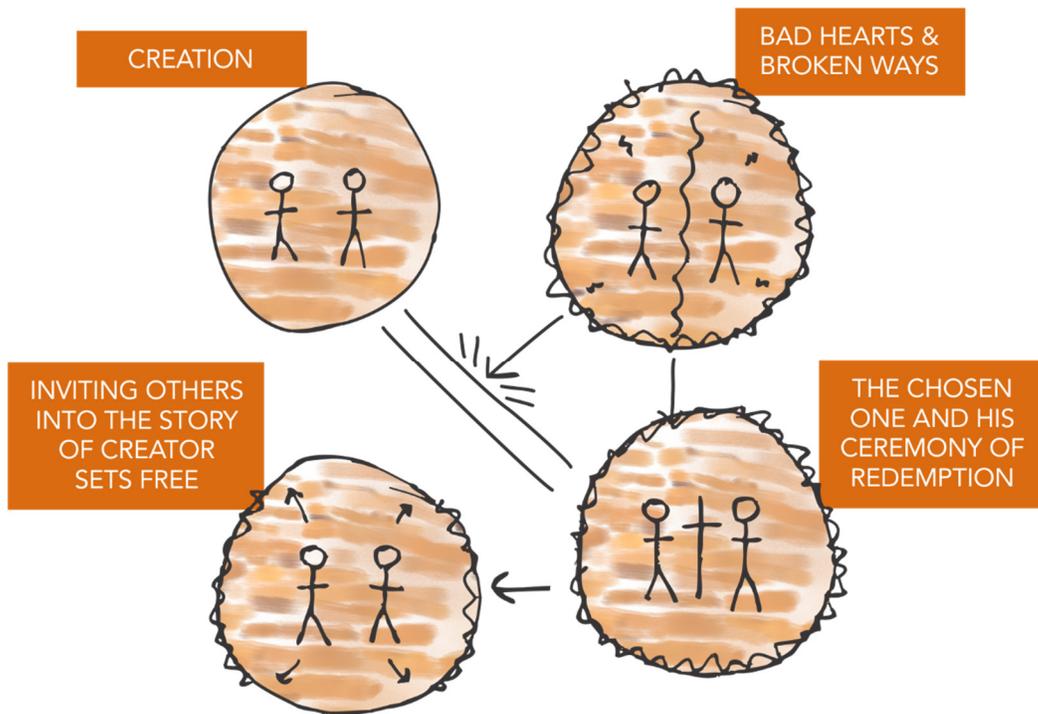
⁴ The king asked, "Well, how can I help you?"

With a prayer to the God of heaven, ⁵ I replied, "If it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

⁶ The king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked, "How long will you be gone? When will you return?" After I told him how long I would be gone, the king agreed to my request.

⁷ I also said to the king, "If it please the king, let me have letters addressed to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, instructing them to let me travel safely through their territories on my way to Judah. ⁸ And please give me a letter addressed to Asaph, the manager of the king's forest, instructing him to give me timber. I will need it to make beams for the gates of the Temple fortress, for the city walls, and for a house for myself." And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me.

As followers of Creator Set Free, we believe that our story is renewed because he opens a new pathway forward in his life for our story:



What would renewal look like in your story?:

Part 2: Imagining a New Way

What do you see in the picture?
How does it relate to your story?

What do you hope to see when
you go home? What do you want
to see renewed in your life?



Read Nehemiah 2:11-20 (see next page)

What do you see that needs to be rebuilt in Nehemiah's story?

Where do you see Creator working in your life and help you to rebuild? Home? Family? Culture? Faith?

Nehemiah 2:11-20
New Living Translation (NLT)

2:11 So I arrived in Jerusalem. Three days later, ¹² I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem. We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding. ¹³ After dark I went out through the Valley Gate, past the Jackal's Well,[a] and over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and burned gates. ¹⁴ Then I went to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble. ¹⁵ So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley[b] instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate. ¹⁶ The city officials did not know I had been out there or what I was doing, for I had not yet said anything to anyone about my plans. I had not yet spoken to the Jewish leaders/priests, the nobles, the officials, or anyone else in the administration. ¹⁷ But now I said to them, "You know very well what trouble we are

in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!" ¹⁸ Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, "Yes, let's rebuild the wall!" So they began the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. "What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" they asked. ²⁰ I replied, "The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no share, legal right, or historic claim in Jerusalem."

Footnotes:

2:13 Or Serpent's Well.

2:15 Hebrew the valley.

As we are invited to be part of this journey of renewal in our lives, family life, community, etc., Creator is helping us to understand where our journey lies ahead. Creator is helping us to rebuild our lives by showing us where we are now and how to put our trust in Creator as our journey continues. Nehemiah received a vision from Creator about his people going back to their homeland and rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem.

Does Nehemiah's prayer in Ch 1 resemble a prayer for Native people to go their homeland and rebuild the ruins of the reservation?

Is Creator providing a vision for Native students to be transformed and sent out to their people?

Richard Twiss, in his book *One Church Many Tribes*, said Nehemiah is a great study in praying with identification. "Though Nehemiah had never lived in Jerusalem and did not personally contribute to its spiritual condition, he prayed, 'Both my father's house and I have sinned' (Neh. 1:6)". Like Nehemiah, we must identify with the brokenness of our lands and own them. We are all in this thing together!

Because of our bad hearts and broken ways, we don't have the tools we need for restoration. But Creator Sets Free identifies with us and brings what we need. As believers we must employ the same tools that Nehemiah utilized. Repentance, confessions, forgiveness, reconciliation and restitution were his instruments of reconciliation; and they must be ours if we are to restore the land.

Consider the Big Story of Creator Sets Free again.



How does the life and work of Jesus exemplify things we see in Nehemiah?

How does Creator Sets Free demonstrate identification?

What sorts of things does he see when he examines the broken state of our hearts?

What is his plan for taking away our disgrace?

Listening prayer. What is one way you could be more like Jesus today?

What does he want you to identify with?

What does he want you to see?

What does he want you to do?

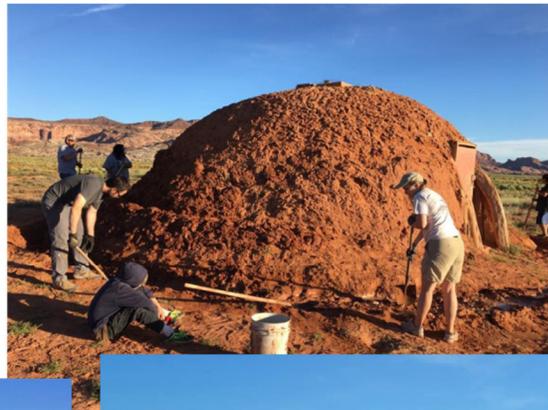
Part 3: Walking the Good Road

Story: Creator's Vision and Yours

What do you see in the pictures below?

What can you do to gain confidence in yourself? What does it mean to have confidence to effect change in your life and your family?

What gives you hope to wake up and do what is right?



Read Nehemiah 4:1-23

Nehemiah 4:1-23

Sanballat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall. He flew into a rage and mocked the Jews, ² saying in front of his friends and the Samaritan army officers, “What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they’re doing? Do they think they can build the wall in a single day by just offering a few sacrifices? Do they actually think they can make something of stones from a rubbish heap charred ones at that?” ³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was standing beside him, remarked, “That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it!” ⁴ Then I prayed, “Hear us, our God, for we are being mocked. May their scoffing fall back on their own heads, and may they themselves become captives in a foreign land!” ⁵ Do not ignore their guilt. Do not blot out their sins, for they have provoked you to anger here in front of the builders.” ⁶ At last the wall was completed to half its height around the entire city, for the people had worked with enthusiasm. ⁷ But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs, Ammonites, and Ashdodites heard that the work was going ahead and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. ⁸ They all made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion. ⁹ But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves. ¹⁰ Then the people of Judah began to complain, “The workers are getting tired, and there is so much rubble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.”

¹¹ Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, “Before they know what’s happening, we will swoop down on them and kill them and end their work.” ¹² The Jews who lived near the enemy came and told us again and again, “They will come from all directions and attack us!” ¹³ So I placed armed guards behind the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I

stationed the people to stand guard by families, armed with swords, spears, and bows. ¹⁴ Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, “Don’t be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!” ¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we knew of their plans and that God had frustrated them, we all returned to our work on the wall. ¹⁶ But from then on, only half my men worked while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. The leaders stationed themselves behind the people of Judah ¹⁷ who were building the wall. The laborers carried on their work with one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon. ¹⁸ All the builders had a sword belted to their side. The trumpeter stayed with me to sound the alarm. ¹⁹ Then I explained to the nobles and officials and all the people, “The work is very spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. ²⁰ When you hear the blast of the trumpet, rush to wherever it is sounding. Then our God will fight for us!”

²¹ We worked early and late, from sunrise to sunset. And half the men were always on guard. ²² I also told everyone living outside the walls to stay in Jerusalem. That way they and their servants could help with guard duty at night and work during the day. ²³ During this time, none of us – not I, nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor the guards who were with me – ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water.

We aren't alone in rebuilding what is right and what needs to change for the betterment of ourselves, our family and our community. Nehemiah realized he would have to trust God from what occurred to the people of Israel and Judah. "Rebuilding the wall" represents removing the barriers, lies, spiritual strongholds that prevent Native students from walking the Good Road and becoming fully alive in the Great Spirit.



As you think about your own call to rebuilding, what strategies of Nehemiah's do you think Creator is calling you to engage with?

In Ephesians, Small Man (Paul) tells us that our fight is not against flesh and blood but against the powers and spiritual forces opposed to Creator's Good Road.

I want to share a story about LiSteN on the Navajo reservation. It started when I was asked to host in my community for a summer immersion experience called LiSteN: Learn & Serve in Navajoland. I prayed and compared ideas with what our Pacific Islander brothers and sisters have done in their immersion experience called Ho'olohe Pono'; which means listen intently and justly.

What role should prayer play as you think about your answer above?

We listened to stories from the community and learn how to serve the people by listening what needs to be rebuilt. As we listened to the Native community, we asked Creator where is he at work and help people to witness that Creator is standing guard for them. It's different from what we expected. We witnessed hope for Native people having a closer relationship with Creator. Hope brings harmony and beauty back to our lives and revives the land. Would you like to attend LiSteN this summer in June?

<http://native.intervarsity.org/events-and-conferences>