

Rebuilding the Walls

*Often, when God wants something done,
he calls us to work side-by-side with each other and with him.*

Introduction

Back in chapter 1 of *The Story*, God created the heavens and the earth. He placed Adam and Eve in the garden and told them to work the land and enjoy the fruit of their labors. Just think about it: before any sin or rebellion existed in the world, God gave his people jobs. In perfect paradise Adam and Eve were not going to simply hang out and do nothing; they had the joy and privilege of working.

In chapter 21 of *The Story* we see that God's pattern of calling his people to fruitful labor was still in place. God called them to rebuild the temple and reestablish worship under the leadership of Ezra. Through their hard work God would provide a beautiful place for his people to gather and worship.

Similarly, God called Nehemiah to lead the people in a massive construction project to rebuild the wall around the city and place gates back on their hinges. This job would include consistent and harsh resistance and take great courage and physical energy.

Maybe most important of all, God wanted the people to work at their relationship with him. Like all relationships, this one would demand time and effort. Indeed, all through *The Story* God is seeking to bring his people back into a healthy, intimate relationship with him.

Talk About It

Tell about your first job or a moment in life when you discovered that some things demand good old-fashioned hard work.

DVD Teaching Notes

As you watch the video segment for session 21, use the following outline to record anything that stands out to you.

Three building projects

Hearing the Word of God

Obeying the Word of God

Malachi has the last word

DVD Discussion

1. Ezra had devoted himself to studying God's Word and following what it teaches (Ezra 7:1 – 10; *The Story*, pp. 291 – 292). How did Ezra's commitment to God's Word shape his life and ministry?

Why is it so important that we do more than just know the content of the Bible but actually obey what the Bible teaches?

2. Randy noted that throughout *The Story* God calls his people to (1) refocus on God; (2) recenter on his plan for our lives; (3) remember who God is; and (4) rebuild our relationship with him. Tell about what you have learned in the past twenty weeks about one of these four themes.
3. God worked through King Artaxerxes to send the exiles back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and reestablish worship (Ezra 7:11 – 28; *The Story*, pp. 293 – 294). How have you seen God use surprising people and circumstances to accomplish his will in this world?

4. Nehemiah was a man of prayer (Nehemiah 1, 4, 6; *The Story*, pp. 294–299). What situations led Nehemiah to pray and what do we learn from his example?
5. Nehemiah not only prayed hard but he worked hard. How do you see this balance in Nehemiah's life? What is the danger of praying hard but not working hard? What are some possible consequences of working hard but forgetting to pray?
6. As the people were seeking to rebuild their relationship with God, they got very serious about reading the Bible. They even had a team of people available to help everyone understand the meaning of God's Word. In what ways can we help the next generation learn to know, love, and follow the teaching of the Bible (in our homes and churches)?
7. Malachi was the last prophet of the Old Testament and this movement of *The Story*. He challenged the people to give God their first and best, not their last and leftovers (Malachi 1:6–10; 3:6–12; *The Story*,

The Bible is not made of 100 ancient, unrelated paintings, but a mural all knitted together to tell of God's great love for us and the extent he will go to get us back.

pp. 302–304). What are some ways we give God our leftovers rather than our first and best?

Why is it so important that we give God the first and best of all we have? What are examples of how we can do this?

8. When the people of God heard the Word of God read and had it explained to them, they moved into action. In this case, they reestablished the feast of tabernacles. Tell of a time you read the Bible and were quickly moved to action because of what God taught you.

*Obeying God's Word,
aligning our lives to his plan,
brings joy to our lives
like nothing else.*



9. Read movements 1–5 of *The Story* (pp. 10–11 of this participant's guide). How do these five movements all connect together to reveal God's love for us?