

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

Notes this week are drawn in part from commentaries on commentaries on Nehemiah by Derek Kidner, Warren Wiersbe, and James Smith, and notes from the HCSB Study Bible, and the Reformation Study Bible (RSB).

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

Reading Nehemiah 4:1-3 Opposition

Notes (See back page for authors) Nehemiah has come from Persia to Jerusalem (1:1ff) at King Artaxerxes’s permission (2:6) to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls. After inspecting the need and making preparation (chapters 2-3) Nehemiah and the Jews begin the work. And, immediately face difficulty! Sanballat and Tobiah, already upset (2:10), ratcheted up the opposition.

Mocking was their first attempt. Wiersbe comments that *some people who can stand bravely when they are shot at will collapse when they are laughed at.* Smith notes that *Sanballat used five rhetorical questions to demean the workers and question their perseverance.* Then Tobiah chimes in with his ridicule. As Smith puts it *A fox could break through their wall by merely leaping on it. Some wall!*

How will Nehemiah and his countrymen respond? How do we respond when opposition comes when we are trying to do God’s work. As hard as this external opposition is, we know, and see in much of the rest of Nehemiah that internal opposition can be even harder and more destructive among God’s people.

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. Who opposed the rebuilding?
 2. Put Sanballat’s 5 questions in your own words
 3. How should we respond to opposition when doing God’s work?
 4.     

- Praise Pray** Psalm 109d²
1. Pray with your family that God will help you overcome opposition in doing His work
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord’s Day you review the previous week’s readings and/or the previous or current week’s sermons and pray together

² Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading Nehemiah 4:19-23 Join Together – with God

Notes (See back page for authors) Nehemiah knew the builders were spread out as they continued building the whole wall to its full height. Because of that, the risk was that the enemies would attack an isolated group and overwhelm them.

In many ways, the Christian life, even in a small church, can look like that. We often don’t live close to each other (although there are good reasons to work at changing that). We tend to not work or study at the same place. Even in a church that has many people meeting mid-week, much of our week is spent apart.

Are there ways to be prepared for an attack? Nehemiah kept watch, and prepared a trumpeter to call the people to come together in case of an attack. When the people heard the trumpet they were to come together. Together they would battle the enemy.

Likewise, as a church, we are to *encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.* Hebrews 3:13 (HCSB)

But even their collective effort would not be the final key to their battle with the enemy. Smith notes that *Nehemiah kept encouraging his subordinates with assurances that God would fight for them in any showdown with the Samaritans (4:15–20).*

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! 1 Corinthians 15:57 (HCSB)

- Questions** (see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. Why were the builders spread out in their work?
 2. How and why might Christians come together?
 3. What is the key to victory in battle for God’s people?
 4.     

- Praise Pray** Psalm 109d
1. Pray that you and your family will fight the enemy, with God’s help
 2. Pray for your family
 3. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
 4. Pray for the reading and preaching of God’s word tomorrow

Reading Nehemiah 4:15-18 Prepared

Notes
(See back page for authors)

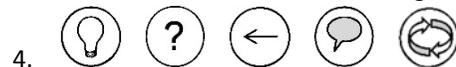
The preparation for the enemies' opposition continues. Even though the enemies knew God had frustrated their scheme they were not likely to give up. So, the builders worked with both sword and trowel at the ready. Of Nehemiah's men, half worked while half carried armour for battle. Labourers who could work one handed carried a weapon in the other. Builders who needed both hands had their sword strapped to their waist.

On the first day of January, 1865, there appeared in England a new religious monthly magazine. It was soon to become well known on the other side of the Atlantic and in many other countries of the world. The Sword and the Trowel was the title given by Charles Haddon Spurgeon to his new venture. The subtitle was: "A Record of Combat with Sin and labor for the Lord." Referring to Nehemiah 4:17,18, Spurgeon aimed at a magazine that would provide material for working and ammunition for warring (battling and building with sword and trowel). (from an article in Sword and Trowel republication edition #2)

As Wiersbe notes, it is not enough to build the wall; we must also be on guard lest the enemy take it from us. Building and battling are both a normal part of the Christian life if we are faithful disciples (Luke 14:28-33).

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How did each of the workers prepare for battle while working?
2. How might we, as Christians, carry "sword and trowel"?
3. What battles will we face in doing God's work?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 109d
1. Ask the Lord in prayer to prepare you for both building and battling
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Nehemiah 4:4-5 Ask God to judge

Notes
(See back page for authors)

What do you do when you face opposition in doing God's work? Get angry? Discouraged? Want to give up? What did Nehemiah do?

He prayed. But he doesn't just pray that they can stand up under trial. He asks God to judge. The RSB notes that *this is the first of three such imprecatory prayers (6:14; 13:29). An imprecatory prayer is one that calls for the enemy to be cursed (e.g., Ps. 79:12; 94:1-3; 137:7-9).*

But how should we Christians approach imprecatory prayers? Aren't they somehow, less than Christian? While difficult, we can learn from these prayers – even for our day.

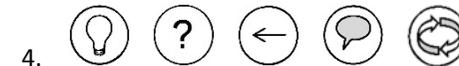
Some important things to remember. We may never pray for personal vengeance. But we can pray against opposition to God's kingdom work. And, for God's will to be done. And we can always pray for the salvation of our enemies (Psalm 83:16).

Finally we must realise this is not an Old Testament vs. New Testament matter. Imprecations are found in Jesus' words (Matt 23, Luke 22:22b) and in other places in the New Testament. (Acts 8:20, 1 Cor 16:22, Rev 6:9-10)

We must remember that God will judge justly. And, we can, carefully, ask Him to do that.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How did Nehemiah respond to this opposition?
2. What particulars did he pray?
3. How should we approach these imprecatory prayers?



Praise Pray

- Psalm 109d
1. Ask God to help those who opposed in doing His Kingdom work
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Nehemiah 4:6-9 Work hard. Pray hard.

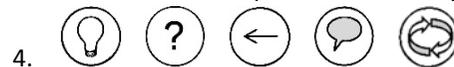
Notes
(See back page for authors)
Even as the opposition was busy, God’s people were busy. Kid-ner notes that *the sturdy simplicity of that statement (so, we rebuilt the wall...) and of the behaviour it records, makes Sanballat and his friends suddenly appear rather small and shrill, dwarfed by the faith, unity, and energy of the weak.*

God will accomplish His work through His people. Might we continually have the will to keep working hard for Him.

In our leisure dominated culture, we might expect the heading of this section to be work hard, play hard. But it’s not play, but pray hard. As they worked willingly in God’s work, they prayed. Enemies surrounded them, so they prayed and they stationed a guard. Notice that their prayers didn’t keep them from taking wise precautions.

Smith notes that *the ranks of the enemies began to swell. Arabs from the south, Ammonites from the east, and Ashdodites from the west joined the Samaritans who lived north of Judea. God’s people were encircled by enemies! The anger of these enemies increased as they witnessed the breaches of the walls being filled. A new strategy was devised to thwart the work: a swift raid which would produce disruption within the city. The builders learned of this impending attack and took appropriate precautions. First they prayed. Then they stationed a guard against such an attack night and day. Here again is the partnership between heaven and earth so evident throughout the Book of Nehemiah.*

- Questions**
(see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. Why did the wall get built to half its height?
 2. How did the enemies respond to this progress?
 3. How did Israel respond to the enemy’s further plots?



- Praise**
Pray Psalm 109d
1. Commit yourself and your family to work hard and pray hard, with God’s help.
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading Nehemiah 4:10-14 Strengthen each other

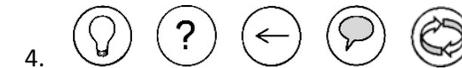
Notes
(See back page for authors)
The work continues, but the workers were painfully aware of their weakness and the enormity of the task at hand. It would have been easy to give up. They were tempted to give up (v10b). The enemy keeps coming – threatening to attack from every side. What would God’s people do?

They would remember God is on their side. And they would help each other. Smith notes that *Nehemiah stationed guards in high spots where they could easily be seen over the low walls. This was counter intimidation. He armed all the workers and placed them with their family groups where they would have the greatest incentive to fight manfully. When he saw their fear, Nehemiah reminded the builders that God “is great and awesome”.*

Wiersbe comments that *after looking the situation over, Nehemiah then encouraged the people not to be afraid but to look to the Lord for help. If we fear the Lord, we need not fear the enemy. Nehemiah’s heart was captivated by the “great and terrible” God of Israel (4:14; see 1:5), and he knew that God was strong enough to meet the challenge. He also reminded the people that they were fighting for their nation, their city, and their families.*

When we remember God is for us, when we fight for (not with) each other, we increase our strength and the strength of each other.

- Questions**
(see back page for explanation of symbols)
1. How did the workers feel in v10?
 2. What was the threat from their enemy?
 3. How did they respond to this threat?



- Praise**
Pray Psalm 109d
1. Rejoice with your family in prayer that God is for you
 2. Pray for a member of your church
 3. Pray for your family
 4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member