



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

Week 39, Day 1 --- Esther 1-5

Week 39, Day 2 --- Esther 6-10

Week 39, Day 3 --- Ezra 7-10

Week 39, Day 4 --- Nehemiah 1-5

Week 39, Day 5 --- Nehemiah 6-7

Week 39, Day 6 --- Nehemiah 8-10

Week 39, Day 7 --- Nehemiah 11-13 - Psalm 126

Week 39, Day 1 --- Esther 1-5

There are a few heroines in the Bible and this is the story of one of them. The story probably takes place after many of the Jews have returned to Jerusalem. However, many of the Jews decided to stay in the lands where they had been taken when captured. They had established good lives there and did not want to go home. Unfortunately, they Jews as a people were not well liked. They lived by a very different standard. They ate different food and worshiped a different God. Throughout all history people have been trying to destroy the Jews.

Esther's opportunity to become a heroine comes because of her great beauty. She becomes queen and has the opportunity to influence the king. The risk is that she might die in her attempt to save the Jews. Think about a time when you were in the position to do something good, but doing the good could have resulted in harm coming to you? What might have happened in this story if Esther had been overcome with fear rather than filled with courage?

Week 39, Day 2 --- Esther 6-10

Today's story really centers around two powerful men. One served the king and his people. The other served himself. The ending is predictable. Mordecai served the king and the result was that he was able to save his people. Haman served himself. He desired wealth and power and was driven by hatred of the Jews. He ended up dead and his wealth went to Mordecai.

Week 39, Day 3 --- Ezra 7-10

The book of Ezra ends with a very sad story. The people had returned from captivity and some of them had immediately taken as wives women who were not Israelites. They knew they were not supposed to do this. This had been one of the main reasons that they had gone into captivity. Men had married foreign wives and then began worshipping their gods. The solution seems drastic. God hates divorce. Even more He hates unfaithfulness in His people. The people desired to make a fresh start, so the men who had married foreign women sent the women and their children away.

Week 39, Day 4 --- Nehemiah 1-5

At first glance it appears that Nehemiah is a low level servant. He is the cupbearer to the king. This means that he tastes the king's wine to ensure it isn't poisoned and then brings it to the king. He was a slave, but he was also a very capable leader who might have had royal blood. He impressed the king and

was appointed governor over Jerusalem. Ezra worked to restore the temple and Nehemiah worked to restore the walls of the city. They were in Jerusalem at the same time. While Ezra dealt with the problem of intermarriage, Nehemiah dealt with the problem of Jews taking advantage of each other financially.

Nehemiah may also have been a soldier. He is a great manager and has a military mind. This is a book that combines great faith in God with incredibly practical action. The following verse really summarizes this.

4:9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

The people's prayer to God was real and they did trust in God, but they also took a responsible action. They did not depend on miraculous intervention. They took responsibility for what they could be responsible for. The combination worked and they were able to continue working on the wall.

Week 39, Day 5 --- Nehemiah 6-7

Nehemiah was focused and his focus saved his life. His enemies' intent went beyond just attempting to distract him. They wanted to kill him. It was clear to everyone that Nehemiah's leadership was the key to the wall getting rebuilt. This passage gives us an understanding of why the listing of names was so important. The priests could not serve in the temple unless they could prove that they were descended from Aaron. When they couldn't prove this the Urim and Thummim were used to determine whether or not they were priests. Basically, the Urim and Thummim were two identical rocks that the priest put in a pocket in his robe. He would put his hand in the pocket and draw out one stone. One stone was "yes" and the other was "no". God determined which stone was picked and answered the priest's questions in this way. How many people entered the land of Israel the first time? You might need to go back and look at Numbers to find the answer. Why are so few left?

Week 39, Day 6 --- Nehemiah 8-10

The Israelites not only rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem, they also worked hard to rebuild their relationship with God. I don't know if they read everything from Genesis through Deuteronomy or just Deuteronomy, but they read enough to know that they had not been obeying what God had commanded. They were saddened by their disobedience, but Nehemiah in his wisdom tells them to celebrate the goodness of God. It was a great beginning and led to a great commitment at the end of today's reading. Chapter 9 is a very complete review of Israel's history to this time. I had probably been at least 1500 years since God called Abraham. What would a 1500 year summary of your people's relationship with God look like? Why is it valuable to know our history?

Week 39, Day 7 --- Nehemiah 11-13 - Psalm 126

You may want to skip over all the names in this section, but do read the rest. Nehemiah has a difficult task. The temple and wall are completed and there is a time of great rejoicing. I can only imagine what it must have sounded like to have everyone in the city singing together. However, now that the focus on rebuilding is completed the people drift back into their normal day to day lives. They lose their focus on God and quickly begin working on the Sabbath and marrying foreign women. Nehemiah makes one last desperate effort to purify the city, but as you will see as you keep reading his efforts do not last. The song of Psalm 126 is a great song and I'm certain it was sung on that day of celebration, but it was also

quickly forgotten. This is one of the main reasons that believers gather together each week. It is important to remember, so that we do not forget what God has done for us.