

A photograph of a Black man in a red t-shirt and blue jeans, standing in profile and opening a teal-colored door with a brass handle. The door is set in a white brick wall. To the left, another teal door is partially visible, and a window with a diamond-patterned leaded glass is seen in the background. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight.

# Opening the door to a New Future

## Leaders' Resources

For a special church service in aid of

The  **Nehemiah** Project

ENABLING MEN TO BREAK FREE FROM ADDICTION AND CRIME

# Inspire your church to give former prisoners a new start in life.

Dear Church Leader,

I am delighted that your church is thinking of holding a 'New Future' service. This is a fantastic way to engage your congregation in understanding how addiction, homelessness and being in prison can affect the lives of men living in our communities and how we can help them to re-build their broken lives.

**In Britain today the prison population is over 86,000 people and 34% of prisoners have the literacy ability, and 51% the numeracy ability, expected of a nine-year-old.**

**On release, prisoners receive just £46 and they often have no accommodation to go and no one to care for them. Lacking money, education, a job, a stable family and a home, over 70% are likely to re-offend spending their lives in and out of prison.**

The challenges released prisoners can face are huge indeed. But that is not the whole story.

The good news is that right now, The Nehemiah Project's workers and volunteers, supported by your gifts and prayers, are helping former prisoners and drug addicts to overcome these challenges.

At Nehemiah we welcome former prisoners and drug addicts into two homes in South London. We give them shelter, food, basic supplies, as well as, opportunities to re-build their lives by providing recovery sessions, facilitating group discussions, offering pre-employment training and coaching to help them secure meaningful employment.

**With more men struggling to cope with a substance free life out of prison and dwindling resources available for helping them, your church's support for The Nehemiah Project has never been more vital.**

Maybe you can hold a special service in aid of Nehemiah during the Prison Prayer week or on an alternative day more suited to your church's calendar. We would very much encourage to pray regularly for our residents and staff as we know that prayer 'TRANSFORMS LIVES'

I hope that you will use this resource pack to inspire your congregation to join forces with us for changing the lives of vulnerable men in our communities.

Thank you so much for joining a growing movement of churches and individuals who are offering hope and a future to these men.



**Dr John Patience**  
The Nehemiah Project CEO



## Support The Nehemiah Project

Every year thanks to the generous gifts of individuals and churches like yours The Nehemiah Project

enables many workers and volunteers share God's love and compassion with some of the most marginalised members of our communities.

Here are some ways your church can partner with us:

- 1. Take a special offering** during the service and send the gifts to us using the church response form provided. You can also download the form at: [www.tnp.org.uk/church-pack](http://www.tnp.org.uk/church-pack)
- 2. Mission Giving** – include The Nehemiah Project in the list of charities your church is going to support from its' missions and outreach budget.
- 3. Invite your congregation to support our work directly by becoming monthly donors.** We can provide regular giving forms that any church member can complete to help a former prisoner or drug addict who is trying to turn their life around.
- 4. Hold a fundraising event** in your church in aid of The Nehemiah Project.

To find out more ways that you can give visit:  
[www.tnp.org.uk/donate](http://www.tnp.org.uk/donate)



## Plan your service

Included in this resource pack are suggestions for Bible readings, hymns, sermon notes, intercessory prayers, and a case study from one of the beneficiaries of The Nehemiah Project.

You can download a PowerPoint presentation and daily prayers from Prison's Prayer Week from [www.tnp.org.uk/church-pack](http://www.tnp.org.uk/church-pack)

### SET A DATE FOR YOUR SERVICE

Every year Prisons Week prayer activities take place during the second week of October. So, you can host a service at the beginning or the end of that week or you can host a special 'New Future' at any other Sunday.

### INVOLVE YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

Let your church groups know that you are planning a special service in aid of The Nehemiah Project and invite them to take part. These may be uniformed organisations in your church, youth groups, choirs, Bible study groups or other community groups. Invite them to participate in the service by preparing prayers, sharing testimonies or by hosting special fundraising events, etc.

### PLAN YOUR EVENT

Look through this resource pack and decide which elements you would like to use in your service. If

you would like to use the PowerPoint presentation on how Nehemiah's initiatives are impacting lives download it from [www.tnp.org.uk/church-pack](http://www.tnp.org.uk/church-pack) and test it to make sure it works with your equipment.

## During the Service

A 'New Future' service offers a great opportunity to inspire your community to think about those who are struggling with addictions on your doorstep, to pray for them and to help them by donating to Nehemiah.

**The Nehemiah Project can truly multiply the impact of your church's generosity by welcoming men who have come out of prison into a home and a supportive environment that can help them get on their feet and build better futures for themselves.**

There are different ways you can encourage your congregation to on participate in the service:

- You can invite congregation members to prepare special prayers for people in prison, for prisoners who are about to be released, for the work of Nehemiah.
- You can invite congregation members to share any stories or testimonies of family members who have been saved by God's grace or any testimonies of their past struggles with addictions and hopelessness.
- You can encourage congregation members to pray regularly for those who are being helped by The Nehemiah Project by asking them to sign up to receive the prayer diary or volunteer.
- You can invite congregation members to give generously during the service to support the vital work of The Nehemiah Project.

## AFTERWARDS

- You can fill out the giving form included in this pack and send funds raised during to:

**The Nehemiah Project**  
**47 Tooting Bec Gardens**  
**London**  
**SW16 1RF**

# Thank you.





## A New Future sermon notes

### Suggested Bible readings:

- **Jeremiah 29:10-14** – God restores the broken who turn to Him for help
- **Mark 4:1-9** – The Parable of the Sower

## Sermon Notes

**The Parable of the Sower** was told to the multitudes in public and explained to the disciples in private. In explaining this parable, Jesus tells us what each element of the parable means.

The seed is God's word, the various soils represent different kinds of hearts; and the various results show the different responses to the Word of God.

**Why compare Gods' word to seed? Because the word is "living and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12).**

Unlike the words of men, the Word of God has life in it; and that life can be imparted to those who will believe. The truth of God must take root in the heart, be cultivated and permitted to bear fruit.

Jesus himself explained that the soil is a picture of the condition of our hearts that can be hard and stony or soft and open and either prevent the words of life taking root in our lives or to allow them to take root and transform our lives

In verse 9 Jesus says, "Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear." We know that in Romans Paul tells us that 'Faith comes by hearing'

It is good for all of us to ask ourselves 'What characterises our lives?' Is it love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? If the answer is 'Yes' - then well done, keep sowing good seed into your lives. But if 'No' then ask God to help you. Remember that God always speaks to us with love in his heart. Ask him to transform your heart.

In Nehemiah most of those we work with come to us directly from Prison. They have decided on one level to transform their lives by living a life without Drugs and Alcohol.

I think many folk come into contact with people who have been in prison much more often than they would think. Of course, and very sadly, when you encounter someone begging for money in the street, with their empty coffee cup for coins and their cardboard sign describing how hungry they are, it's a fair bet that they have been in prison, and most of us know that.

It may be that there is someone in your family who has been to prison, maybe many years ago when they were young and hot headed and did stupid things, lost their temper, got greedy or quite simply drove too fast. It may not be something you talk about, but Uncle Fred's 'time away' is always in the background.

The sort of place where you will meet people who have been in prison and not know about it is if you shop in some of the larger supermarkets, get your shoes repaired, or your car serviced. There are companies, large and small who see it as good for their business to employ people who have been to prison, often training them while they are serving their sentences.

There is one street in South London where many of the neighbours have no idea that the house in their road is a residence for people who have come out of prison and who are putting huge efforts into addressing the problems which got them into prison on the first place – most commonly problems with drugs and alcohol and then the family breakup which follows this. This house is run by the Nehemiah Project.

We have just heard the beautiful parable which Jesus tells of the sower sowing his seed. You must know it so well. There are many people who work in prison who do their utmost to **sow the seeds of recovery in the hearts and minds of the prisoners.**

Drug counsellors, teachers, probation staff, health care workers, chaplains, volunteers and often most importantly prison officers, will try to develop coping strategies in the prisoners in their care. And, in prison, in spite of some strong temptations, many people do manage to stay clean.

It is once they are released that the weeds, the birds, the sun, the soil, all conspire to bring them down. Drug dealers waiting at the prison gates; so-called friends phoning them up; outstanding debts and fines; unhelpful hostels; and quite simply boredom all can drag very vulnerable people who have just emerged from the prison gates back into a pattern of drug use, crime and family breakdown.

### **How can we ensure that the goodness which is in every prisoner can grow and flourish?**

We must follow the example of Jesus Christ himself. He had a radical approach to sinners which scandalised many of those who were closely observing his every move. Just recall how Jesus was welcomed into the house of Zacchaeus, a very public sinner.

Anyone who has travelled in the Middle East will know that the tradition of hospitality there means that a meal is much more than food – it is conversation, laughter, wine, and maybe even music. This is how we can think of Jesus when he dines with sinners. His first actions are not condemnation of the sinner; his first actions are to give them dignity.

The Nehemiah Project is all about giving people who have been in prison dignity and autonomy. It helps the seeds of recovery which have been sown in prison to grow and flourish. Its communities are small, and there is a real home like family atmosphere in each house. It gives the men the tools to work on their recovery from drugs and alcohol; it gives them a community and a purpose.

The Nehemiah Project helps its residents in so many ways: it helps them to face their addictions; it helps them to manage money; it helps them find work; it brings families back together. It works with people of all faiths or none. It does not seek to convert people – it seeks rather to serve anyone who is open to change their lives.

Please pray for and support the work of The Nehemiah Project. With your support many people who have been in prison will be given the tools to flourish on release – and you never know, you may see one of them in the street, at work, in the gym or in church and never recognise that they have been to prison.



## Suggested Bible readings and songs

### SUGGESTED BIBLE READINGS

**Luke 10:25-37** – Love your neighbour as yourself

**Luke 8:4-15** – The Parable of the sower

**Luke 15: 11-32** – The parable of the prodigal son

**Jeremiah 29:10-14** – God restores the broken who turn to Him for help

**Luke 7:36-50** – God who forgives and tells you to go in peace

**Acts 4:32-35** – Giving to those in need is a mark of a true disciple

**Amos 8:4-7** – We give the needy a helping hand to join humanity again

**Matthew 25:31-46** – Jesus calls us to help the stranger, the prisoner, the hungry and the sick

### HYMNS AND SONGS SUGGESTIONS

**Freedom and life are ours** – Christopher Idle

**Beauty for brokenness** – (God of the poor)  
Graham Kendrick

**Jesus hands were kind hands** – Margaret Cropper

**Be thou my vision** – Mary Byrne & Eleanor Hull

**Make me a captive** – Lord George Matheson &  
George Job Elvey

**Justice and mercy** – Matt Redman

**I, the Lord of sea and sky** – Daniel L Schutte

**Make me a channel of your peace** –  
Sebastian Temple





## Case Study

Simon came from a big family; he was one of ten children and from an early age he started rebelling against his strict father.

He left home at 14 years old and lived on the streets or with friends. He was already drinking and doing drugs at that time. Feeling angry and alienated from his family he began to commit petty crimes like shoplifting.

**He stole food and drink to survive. He felt he could not go back home because his father would abuse him and beat him up.**

During the next 20 years, Simon went in and out of prison for various crimes. It took him a long time to admit that he had an alcohol and drug problem. In his thirties, he was also diagnosed with diabetes and was warned that he kept on drinking he would end up in coma or worse.

So, one time he came out of prison he heard about The Nehemiah Project from another former inmate.

**He was desperate to do something to change his life, so he came to Nehemiah house.**

From day one Simon received support from The Nehemiah Project. He was given a room, food and toiletries whilst his benefits were processed. Also, he was encouraged to participate in Nehemiah's recovery programme called 'A New Future' which takes place every day for 12 weeks.

'A New Future' is a cognitive behavioural therapy programme which aims to address fundamental issues that contribute to desistance. During this course, Simon was asked to examine his motivations and encouraged to take responsibility for his actions. He was taught how to manage his drug and alcohol misuse, how to look after himself physically and emotionally. In addition to this, he was also given a chance to learn basic financial and practical skills for healthy relationships.

Once Simon graduated from the 'A New Future' programme he was asked to join the 'Move-on' programme. In practice, this meant that he moved to another house and continued to receive training from his Nehemiah key worker on how to find employment, on skills to build independence, how to reconnect with his family.

**Simon was part of the Nehemiah community for over two years.**

Having got his life on track, Simon started a volunteer placement at a cricket club, working in the kitchens. Now, Simon is seeking employment as a care worker so that, in time, he can have his own place to live.

Over the last year, he found his way back to God too. He has joined a local church and he enjoys being part of the church community.

**He does not miss the streets anymore. He has found his family.**

## Will your church help to Transform Lives by supporting The Nehemiah Project?

Thanks to the past generosity of churches like yours, The Nehemiah Project was there for Simon and other men like him by offering them a home, friendship, therapy and practical advice,

So, please give generously to our special 'New Future' appeal to enable our workers to help more troubled men like Simon.

### WHAT YOUR CHURCH'S GIFT CAN MAKE POSSIBLE

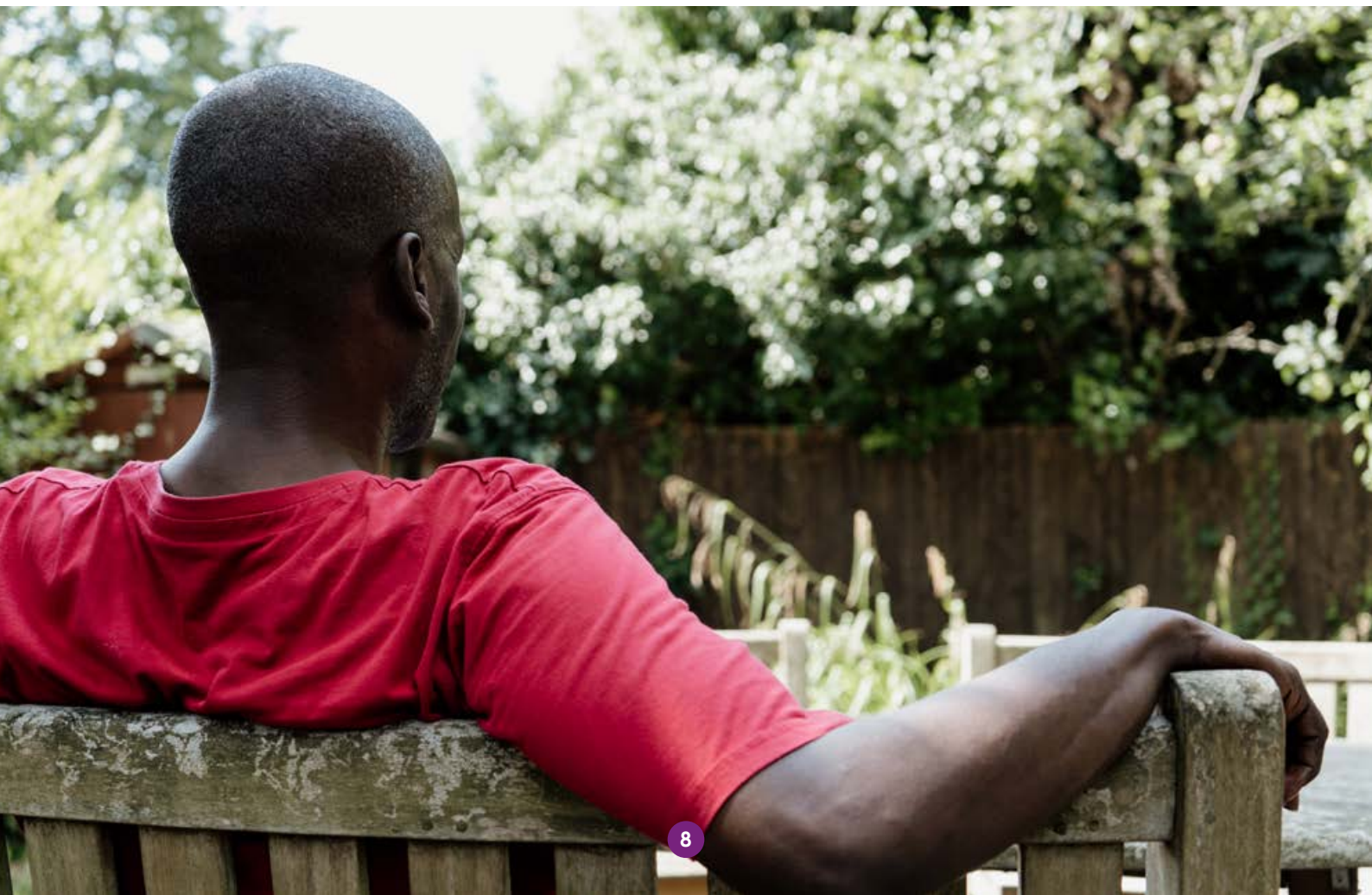
**£250** can enable Nehemiah's workers to welcome a released prisoner and provide them with basic necessities including food, toiletries, clothes and transport for a month.

**£500** can give a Nehemiah resident regular access to a key worker for a whole month ensuring that they receive encouragement, training and support to break the bonds of addiction in their lives.

**£1,000** can sponsor five modules of 'A New Future' programme offering a group of young men opportunities to identify and address the roots of their problems and to learn valuable skills for managing their anger and addictions.

**£2,500** can provide five Nehemiah residents with pre-employment training giving them the skills and confidence they need to find meaningful employment.

**£5,000** can ensure that a former prisoner can participate in the 12-week 'A New Future' programme, helping them to build a better future that is drug and alcohol free.





## INTERCESSORY PRAYERS FOR THOSE SEEKING TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

**Leader:** Loving God, you command us to love and forgive those who make mistakes as you do, to care for them and to welcome strangers in our communities.

**All:** Fill our hearts with compassion and inspire us to act in ways that can bring your freedom and fullness of life to people who are spending their lives in and out of prison.

**Leader:** We give thanks for the men who have been helped by Nehemiah in the past and we pray that the seeds of new life that have been sown in their hearts will continue to grow and that they will continue to build new and secure futures for themselves and their families.

**All:** Give us eyes to see those who are struggling with addictions or homelessness in our streets and neighbourhood and use us to touch their lives with acts of kindness and with our prayers. Use us to sow the seeds of hope in their lives and to encourage and support them to get the help they need.

**Leader:** We pray for John and his team at The Nehemiah Project now. We thank you that you have called them to be beacons of your love, justice and hope to those who have lost their way.

Give the key workers and volunteers an abundance of strength, wisdom and patience so they can continue to impact young lives. Surround them with your love and provide the funds they need to do such vital work.

**All:** Give us caring hearts so we can join forces with them through our giving and prayers.

**Leader:** We pray for Simon and other men like him who are being helped every day by Nehemiah.

Thank you for enabling them to break free from addiction and to start rebuilding their lives.

Watch over them, guide their steps and enable them to connect with their families and make new friends who can spur them on to do good in their lives.

**All:** Help us , to serve those in our community who feel trapped in hopelessness, addictions and isolation.

**Amen**

*"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."*

**Matthew 25:40**