



NEHEMIAH



DAY 1

READ: NEHEMIAH 1

An amazing event occurred in the spring and summer of the year 445 BC. Nehemiah, a cupbearer for the King, makes the long journey from near the Persian Gulf to Jerusalem. He was a man of high status and trust in his kingdom. Attaining the role of cupbearer was honorific and given to only a select few through history. The role was highly valued and required a cherished relationship with the King. Nehemiah was a wise, respected and trustworthy man. This journey Nehemiah was on had been triggered from a conversation. It was a conversation about the remaining Jews who had escaped and survived captivity. Nehemiah was concerned because these were his people. Jerusalem was the land of his fathers. Then some troubling news, *“they (the Jews) are in great distress and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates burned with fire.”* Jerusalem was not only disarmed from enemies, but completely on its own.

If we take a look at this description of Jerusalem, this may be familiar in our own lives. In your past, there may be places where walls were broken down. You no longer have any ability to resist destructive attacks. You have fallen victim to sinful habits you find difficult to break. There are parts of your life you find difficult to talk about. You have a sense of personal distress mixed with shame and disgrace. Perhaps it began innocently and grew into something uncontrollable.

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When we experience these moments, what is your first reaction? Is your reaction in these moments to maintain a death grip on various vices? Is it to find ways on the outside to maintain control of others because you inwardly can't control yourself? Take a look at what Nehemiah did.

The first decisive action Nehemiah displays at this news was to fast and pray.

RESPOND

Today, reflect on the areas in your life where you need to give up control to God. What sinful habits have been consistently returning in your life? If these begin to pop up starting today – let your first reaction be to pray!

DAY 2

READ: NEHEMIAH 2

Nehemiah prayed, and then waited. Suddenly, it happened. At the moment it was supposed to happen, Nehemiah was able to speak with the King. The King was able to supply the resources Nehemiah needed for the task he felt spiritually called. Nehemiah could've easily said, "Okay, I've prayed. Now God will do it!" And while God could handle His work, He chooses to work through obedient people. Proverbs 16:3 says, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans." God established the plans of doers. Nehemiah didn't just complain about a problem and then go back to his desk wishing God would make things happen. Nehemiah ACTED. He did more than pray. With courage, Nehemiah spoke to the King. He was not satisfied with the idea that someone else would do it. If we were to peer inside his thoughts in this moment, we might hear something like "someone has to do it, so it might as well be me!" The walls would be built in 52 days.

We all doubt God sometimes, but it is usually a lack of action that keeps us stuck, not a lack of faith. There are many times we can be sad about a problem but do nothing about it. How many moments in life have we had our hearts broken over something we see, but do nothing about?

We are told in James 2:20, "Faith without works is useless". Let's respond to the opportunities God gives us. Is your heart broken for something? Do you know your next step?

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RESPOND

What keeps you from acting?

Where do you feel God calling you to?

DAY 3

READ NEHEMIAH 8

The people wept over how far they had walked away from God. Then Ezra, a teacher of the law, and Nehemiah, now governor, told them to move past their guilt and shame. Nehemiah and Ezra weren't giving people permission to sin. Instead, they were redirecting people's attention: stop focusing on how bad we are and start focusing on how great God is! Nothing could undo the past. The people's hearts were repentant, and it was time to move on.

Realizing we've sinned causes a specific kind of sorrow called, "conviction". The good news for every believer is that Jesus made it possible to move past this grief. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Once we've confessed, it's time to stop grieving. Often, the feeling of forgiveness is not felt. We do know, however, that Jesus does forgive – and for that we are truly forgiven. Feelings of worthlessness and shame are not the same as conviction, and these feelings are not from God. Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." We have to trust that Jesus' payment was enough.

When we begin operating our mind with these truths, we can become instruments of God to be a difference maker. Regardless of your past and who you are – God will begin to use you in many more ways when we operate with this mind, choosing His grace over our shame.

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RESPOND

Today, where can you focus on God's goodness rather than your past?

Where can you be an instrument of grace to those in your life?

GROUP DISCUSSION

ICE BREAKER

What is your favorite “Dark Horse” movie of all time?

DISCUSS 1

What are some of the biggest areas you think people feel inadequate? Of the three major causes of inadequacy (unrealistic compliments, unrealistic criticism, and unrealistic comparison) which one do you battle with the most and why?

DISCUSS 2

Read Psalm 139:14, Psalm 46:1, and 1 Peter 2:9-10. We were wonderfully made, a chosen people and bearing His strength. When you hear these verses what truths stick out to you and why? If we start seeing ourselves the way God does, how would life be different? What are some ways we can start to see ourselves the way God sees us?

DISCUSS 3

Read Isaiah 40:29-31 and Ephesians 6:10. Share a time when you experienced God use you to do something that you felt inadequate to do. How did that experience strengthen your confidence in the God’s presence?

TAKE AWAY

If you knew God was with you, sees more, and has given you more, what are you not attempting that God has called you to? What is God challenging you to go out and do for Him?

