

Responding to Bad News
Nehemiah: Building Beyond Ourselves, Part 1
January 11th & 14th, 2018

A Look at the Times

Abraham – 2,000 BC → United Kingdom – 1,000 BC → Divided Kingdom – 880 BC

ISRAEL – Northern Kingdom (10 tribes); JUDAH – Southern Kingdom (2 tribes)

Israel had 19 kings, 0 were good – Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 BC – (10 lost tribes)

Judah had 20 kings, 8 were good – Babylonians conquered Judah in 605 BC – destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC – (taken as slaves back to Babylonian)

2 Chronicles 36:18-20 (NIV) “¹⁸ He [King Nebuchadnezzar] carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord’s temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They set fire to God’s temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. ²⁰ He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power.”

Persians defeated the Babylonians – in 538 BC King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their homeland after spending 70 years in exile

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 (NIV) “²² In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, ... the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing: ²³ This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of His people among you may go up, & may the Lord their God be with them.’”

In 536 Zerubbabel leads 50,000 back to Jerusalem & rebuilds the TEMPLE (completed in 516 BC)

In 457 BC Artaxerxes issues a decree for Ezra to return to Jerusalem and establish WORSHIP in the temple

Ezra 7:8&10 (NIV) “Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king... For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”

In 444 BC Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem to rebuild the CITY WALLS.

How to Respond to Bad News

Nehemiah 1:1-4 (NIV) “The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ² Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. ³ They said to me, ‘Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.’ ⁴ When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Though Nehemiah was in a high-ranking position, he had a heart that was very TENDER toward God

With each promotion in life there is a danger to one’s spiritual life – many fall prey to PRIDE
Proverbs 16:18 (NIV) “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

1. Must have a clear recognition of the NEEDS

Nehemiah 1:4 (Amp) “Now it came about when I heard these words,...”

PREOCCUPATION causes us to not see the real problems around us

Question: Are you SEEING the problems you ought to be solving?

2. Must be PERSONALLY concerned with the need

“Let us learn this lesson from Nehemiah: ... You are never used of God to bring blessing until God has opened your eyes and made you see things as they are.” Alan Redpath

Nehemiah 1:4 (NIV) “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Concern must be paired with **COMPASSION**

1 Samuel 3:13 (Amp) “[God said] Now I have told him [Eli, the high priest] that I am about to judge his house forever for the sinful behavior which he knew [was happening], because his sons were bringing a curse on themselves [dishonoring and blaspheming God] and he did not rebuke them.”

“The church can seldom resurrect what the home puts to death.” Charles Swindoll

“Fasting” means missing a meal to **FOCUS IN** on your relationship with God

3. Go to God **FIRST** with the **PROBLEM**

Your people problem, whatever it may be, will not be completely **SOLVED** until you take it to God in prayer

Nehemiah...

- **PRAISED** God – “Lord God of Heaven! You are great, and we stand in fear of You. You faithfully keep Your covenant with those who love You and do what You command.” (verse 5 - GN)
 - Confessed **HIS PART** in the problem – “I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! ⁷We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that You gave us...” (verse 6,7 – NLT)
 - Claimed God’s **PROMISE** – “Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying...” (verse 8 – NAS)
 - Brought his **REQUEST** before God – “O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring You. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.’ In those days I was the king’s cup-bearer.” (verse 11 – NLT)
4. **Be available to meet the need YOURSELF** – “[Nehemiah prayed] make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man [the king].” (verse 11 – NAS)
- Must say, “I’m **AVAILABLE**, Lord – ready and willing.”

Benefits of Prayer

- Prayer makes me **WAIT** – have to wait to act until you finish praying
- Prayer clears my **VISION** – like morning fog/haze, prayer burns through the fog to see clearly
- Prayer quiets my **HEART** – can’t worry and pray at the same time; prayer calms my spirit
- Prayer activates my **FAITH** – after praying I am more prone to trust God

My Next Step Today Is:

- I will be in a small group during this series (Connection Event is tonight at 6:30 pm)
- I will read the daily devotional guide during this series
- I will “fast” one (1) meal a week & use that time to focus on my relationship with God
(If you have a medical condition that may prohibit you fasting, consult your doctor first before fasting!)

Next week: Join us next week as we explore “preparing the meet God.” Bring a friend!