

# Do you Care Enough to ...?

Nehemiah 1

You read the news of the day. You hear soundbites from politicians. Celebrities post their opinions on social media. You are confronted with challenges, opportunities, and needs. What moves you to indifference? What moves you to tears? What moves you to prayer? What moves you to action?

As the book of Nehemiah opens, Nehemiah is made aware of the challenging situation faced by the exiles who returned to Jerusalem. They are struggling physically and spiritually. His heart is broken after hearing the report, and he falls to his knees in prayer. Nehemiah's example demonstrates that *when confronted with a problem, we need to seek God's help first before taking action to address the issue.*

## **Nehemiah Cared Enough to Ask (1-3)**

Nehemiah was an ordinary Israelite born into captivity. He held a cabinet-level position under Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch (11).

The story opens in November/December 444 B.C., in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign (1). It takes place in Susa, the winter capital of the Persian Empire.

Some men arrive from Judah, including Nehemiah's brother, Hanani (2).

Nehemiah asks first about the people, and then about the city. Leaders are people oriented.

The news is not good (3). The people are in distress and the walls of the city are in disarray. Under Ezra, the people had started rebuilding the city and the walls, but had stopped because of opposition (Ezra 4:12, 23). King Artaxerxes had been pressured by some Samaritans and Rehum, the commanding officer, to stop the work.

## **Nehemiah Cared Enough to Weep (4)**

Verse 4 is a hinge verse. It looks backwards in summary and forward in preview.

Nehemiah is extremely concerned and responds emotionally. He grieves physically by weeping and mourning. He responds spiritually by fasting and praying. Nehemiah does this for four months (2:1).

Before a need can become a vision, it must first become a burden.

## **Nehemiah Cared Enough to Pray (5-11)**

Nehemiah faced a situation he could not solve by himself. But he knew that with God all things are possible.

Nehemiah's prayer begins with worship (5). He uses six different words or phrases to describe something about God:

Lord

God of heaven

Great

Awesome

Keeps the covenant

Steadfast love

Nehemiah confesses the sin of the nation (6-7). Using "we," he identifies with his people. He acknowledges that he shares responsibility for Israel's disobedience. The better you know God, the more you are aware of your own sin.

Using "servant" several times, he places himself in a submissive role.

Nehemiah asks God to remember his promises (8-10). Rather than reminding God of something he forgot, he is leading God to act on his behalf.

The better you know God, the more you can trust him for the impossible.

Nehemiah prayed for an opportunity and for favor with the king (11).

### **Principles to Practice**

God can use you regardless of your position or role in life. Don't let your circumstances or position in life stop you.

Ask God to break your heart with the things that break his.

Pray, Pray, Pray ... before you act.

*"You can do more than pray after you have prayed,  
but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed."*

John Bunyan