

## Nehemiah

What is this book of Nehemiah about??

### 1. It's about **looking out for people.**

*In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, <sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.*

Nehemiah was interested in what was happening back home. A genuine interest in his people. We need to develop this. Often those of us who have been brought up in the church or have been involved with church for a long time forget there are people out there. While we know in our head that people need God, we forget their need and focus on what the church itself is doing, focus on what we do at church and we lose contact with our community. If nothing else – this year I would love to see us reconnect with those around us, with those people who need Jesus.

### 2. The message of Nehemiah is about **feeling** something for other people.

*NE 1:3 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."*

*NE 1:4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven*

Compassion is out of vogue out of fashion. Life today seems all about what I can get out of it. Even our worship seems to be person orientated instead of focussing on God.

Reconnecting with our community will mean that we need to know what is going on in peoples lives and react to it. We react really well to tragedy like accidents, floods, fires and such but forget tragedy on a personal scale. We forget people are hurting from loneliness, divorce, substance dependence, abuse, alienation, illness. Actually people are just hurting. Surely we have to feel something! Surely we realise God can assist these people. Surely we realise we can present Jesus to them. Surely we feel something for them. Or do we wait until it hits us personally.

Maybe we see too much on TV and no longer feel much because we see too much. Anyway.

Notice what Nehemiah did though. Mourned, fasted and prayed.

Upset sure, but put some effort into placing the news into perspective.

Fasting is something done when the person is really serious about seeking God's direction. He fasted and prayed. Maybe we need to revisit the fasting thing, maybe we need to use it as a tool to focus on our ministries!!!!

He also prayed. A fairly formal prayer, but the Jews are like that. Lets take a bit of a look at this pray. We may revisit it later in the year when we look at prayer.

### 3. It is about **repentance**.

*"O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

He recognises and articulates where God is in relation to Himself.  
Basic worship.

Interesting – worship can happen when your mourning too!!!!  
Great and awesome God. Basic credit for who God is. That's worship.

Notice too that he asks God to listen. Assumes God is interested. All through scripture we are told God is interested. Here we have an example of someone who takes that literally. He assumes God is interested in what he has to say and interested in God's people and interested in keeping his promises. The amazing part is – His God is our God and God is still interested. In your life and in mine. I remember in a discussion group once someone asked is God interested in what I eat for breakfast? I thought that this was a bit out there and not really on the topic of God's will but the guy needed to know how interested God was in his life. Does God have a favoured breakfast cereal? Does God think breakfast is important? Does He care what colour shirt I wear to church? Hink about it – how interested is God in my life?

Well, I think He loves you and is interested in anything that affects your life.  
Here in this passage Nehemiah assumes God is interested in His people.  
Look what Nehemiah does next.

He confesses the people's sins.  
Does Nehemiah have the right to confess others sin?  
Do I have the right to confess others sin????

Well I don't know, but hey each of us need to be realistic about sin. Both ours and corporately.

Notice that he states the real problem – they have not obeyed. This situation has nothing to do with which army is more powerful but with obedience. The whole situation came about due to a lack of respect for God. In some ways that's what disobedience is. A lack of respect for who God is. What is our respect level for God? Are we really serious about

our relationship with Him or do we fit Him in where we can. If we fit Him in where we can then our respect is pathetic.

Let's be really blunt here. We talk about fitting God into our lives. You know, Church, bible study, personal devotions, prayer. Now I know that you can't fit something bigger into something smaller. God is not going to fit into your life. We need to turn it around. We need to fit into God. Much easier to achieve, much more biblical and much more practical. When we say we don't have time to read our bible – it is us who has a problem not God. When we don't have time to go to bible study – it is us who has not prioritized. And yeh I know, you think I can say that because it is my job. No, I can say it because I am your pastor. Doesn't matter who we are- God needs to be treated with respect.

4. **Finishing up -The book is about success.**

*NE 1:8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations,<sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

*NE 1:10 "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."*

If you want to be truly successful – get right with God. Granting favour. Nehemiah wants a favour and then He will be successful. But the favour is God centred. God does it. Success is dependant on God. We have to ask ourselves if this is a true statement. Is it true in our lives. Perhaps so, perhaps not. But Nehemiah believed it to be so.

5. It is about something else as well, but you will have to come next week to find out what.