

Nehemiah: A Troubled Heart

[Nehemiah 1:1-11](#)

As the book of Nehemiah begins, many of God's people remain in exile. Meanwhile, those who have returned to Jerusalem face trouble and disgrace, their city in ruins. Nehemiah has enjoyed prosperity and status in the Persian Empire at the right hand of the king. However, when he hears of the distress of his people, his heart is moved, and he goes to God in repentance to ask for mercy and favor. He is willing to risk himself in order to bless God's people.

Application

1. Although as believers, we are exiles in this world, many of us have been thoroughly assimilated into our American culture. Where are you heavily invested in the social, political, and economic power structures of our country? Is America your "native soil"?
2. Nehemiah's heart was captured by a vision of Jerusalem restored and glorifying God. What would it look like for the light of the gospel to overwhelm our culture here in the Upstate? How can you pray towards the vision? What action steps can you take to make it a reality?
3. Nehemiah moves because he knows God's Word and God's heart for his people. How well do you know God's Word? Does it play a role in your daily decisions and interactions with people? How do you need to grow in your understanding of the Scriptures?
4. Just because something isn't your fault doesn't mean you don't have responsibility. Where do you see brokenness in your immediate circle of influence? How can you own the cause of restoration in that situation?

Key Points

- Nehemiah's family has been living in exile for generations. This creates tension and ambiguity for Nehemiah—he is living and prospering in the powerful Empire of Persia, yet his core identity is that of Jew.
- When he receives word that the people of Israel are not faring well in Judah, Nehemiah's heart is troubled. He recognizes his responsibility in the situation. In the same way, we are responsible for the burdens of fellow believers.

- As he cries out to God in prayer, Nehemiah speaks with boldness and humility. He repents of his sin and affirms God's faithfulness.
- We often view the church as a place to go and get something to make our lives better. However, the church is about our interconnectedness as believers. We take on one another's burdens because Jesus took on our burdens.
- Even though Nehemiah has been living in comfort, his new awareness moves him to take a step that is risky and disruptive to his life. We should also value the glory of God over the comforts of our daily lives.
- Nehemiah's story is a prelude to the great story of the Bible. Jesus also leaves a glorious palace to identify with a lowly and obscure people.

Other Scripture References

[Jeremiah 29](#)