

The Kind of People God Uses

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Text: Nehemiah 1:11b-2:8

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Nehemiah 2**. We begin a new study in the Scriptures through the book of Nehemiah. The title of the message this morning is "The Kind of People God Uses".

[Prayer for Guidance]

As we looked at last week, the book of Nehemiah is not primarily about building the walls of the city of Jerusalem, but was God gathering His people together to worship Him, praise Him, live for Him, and love each other for the glory of God.

Yesterday we began the process of remodeling the property next door so that we can expand not only our Spanish ministries, but all our ministries. We want to be a lighthouse to this neighborhood. We want to thank every one who came out yesterday to the work day to make our building a suitable place for God's people to learn and live God's Word. When you care for God's facilities, you are ultimately caring for God's people, because this place is a tool to make us all more like Christ. We have an architect working on the plans for the building, but the architect of the church is God!

And as you know the book of Nehemiah is all about God building His city within a city and a nation. That's what we want to see happen here in Hanover Park.

The walls that protected the city of Jerusalem had been torn down by the Babylonian army 141 years earlier. The gates were burned. God's people were either killed or in exile or in slavery in Babylon. As a result of this, God's name was thought very little of among the nations. It had been this way for 141 years! News reaches Nehemiah. He's not in Jerusalem but in one of the capital cities of Persia (Shushan), for a foreign king (Artaxerxes). He is essentially a well treated slave. He's not Persian. He's the king's cupbearer.

Though he has know about the walls of Jerusalem all his life, it hits him in a new way. He's broken and troubled. He's weeping, fasting, and praying for 3 to 4 months. The point of all of it, is we all can have things that are broken in our lives: unsaved loved ones, a job situation that you know does not please God, a bad relationship in your life—and you haven't been as troubled as you should be. It's been that way for so long. Then one day God opens your eyes! You are impacted and troubled deeply. There is a tendency to think that hard things in our life cannot change. Maybe you have a sinful habit. Maybe you think your mom or dad, loved one or friend will never be saved. It's been that way for so long, you think that's the way it always will be.

Nehemiah realized in a moment that the walls of Jerusalem should not remain torn down—his situation should not remain the same! Nehemiah prayed and fasted and he would later move to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. His residence was in

Jerusalem, but his heavenly citizenship was in heaven. It is that way with all of us who know Jesus Christ. Our residence is here in Chicagoland, but our citizenship is in heaven! We who know Christ are God's city within our city. And we want to help our city be the best that it can possibly be in the eyes of God. The only way that can happen is if one by one, the people of your city bow their knee to the Lordship of Jesus. The greatest gift you can give to your city is to introduce it to Jesus Christ.

Acts 17 tells us that God determines when and where we live. So God has you right where He wants you for His purposes. And His purpose right now is for us to build His kingdom right here in Hanover Park. If we are going to have a part in building God's city in Hanover Park, then we are going to have to learn two lessons today—we need to learn about **prayer** and **planning**.

I. God uses people in the **PLACE** that they are. I've Consider Nehemiah.

A. God can use you no matter what your **JOB** is. Some people think they need to be a missionary or a pastor for God to use them to bring people to Christ or to do something great through them. Remember Paul was a tent maker. Our Lord Jesus was a carpenter.

Nehemiah was a common person, but he had an unusual JOB

To pray well and to plan well, you have to be serving God right where you are. Nehemiah was. Look at **Nehemiah 1:11b**. This is a first person account of what was going on in his life, like a journal entry. Remember the words we are reading are about 2500 years old, but they are vitally relevant and important to all of us today. Nehemiah says, "...I was the king's cupbearer". This was Nehemiah's job. This is a very important, but very dangerous line of work. Nehemiah was working for a foreign king. All the nations surrounding Persia wanted to kill the king. Normally they would do this by slipping poison into his food or wine. So the king would hire someone to taste his food and wine. The way you would know if the drink was poisoned is that the cupbearer would be dead.

It is not a nine-to-five job. Whenever the king ate – and it could be early in the morning or it could be at midnight – Nehemiah was expected to be there. Of course he would sample the food, and if it was poisoned, he would **die**. Nehemiah was a man of courage. His job had some perks. He would live in the palace. He ate and drank very well, but there was always the risk that he could die on the job.

B. God can use you no matter what your **JURISDICTION** is. You may have little or great influence, but God can use you. Remember David was a shepherd boy when God called him. Joseph was a nobody when God gave him visions that he would one day be prime minister of Egypt. Nehemiah happened to have a great amount of authority and jurisdiction. **Nehemiah was a common person, but he had an unusual JURISDICTION.**

Nehemiah's job is a very important one. The famous Artaxerxes life is dependent on Nehemiah doing his job. Remember Nehemiah is a foreign exile, a slave. How does a foreign slave rise to the place where the king's very life is in his hand? There is a lesson to be learned here.

C. God can use you no matter what your **GENIUS** is. **Though Nehemiah was a common person, he had an unusual FAITHFULNESS.** God used Nehemiah not because he was unusually smart or of great ability. He was unusually faithful.

Nehemiah has not led the people of Israel up until this time, but he has been meticulously faithful in his job, his character, his life. It is staggering that Artaxerxes would choose, ***not a member of his own ethnic identity—a Persian***, but a Jew; a member of a race of people that he has conquered, and who would have every right to attempt to kill the king. This tells us of the immense integrity, the character of Nehemiah.

The Bible teaches us that if we are "faithful over a few things" God will make us "ruler over many things" (**Matthew 25:21**). Joseph was the same. He rose to prominence against all odds, not because he was necessarily gifted, but because he was faithful and trusted. If you are a man or a woman who is committed to helping and serving in the little things, then you are the kind of person God will use.

I. God uses people in the **PLACE** that they are.

II. God uses people who **PRAY**. For God to use you, you don't have to have a college degree or be greatly talented, but you do need to know how to pray! Why?

A. Because we get **Backbone** and courage in prayer. Look now at **Nehemiah 2:1**, "And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence".

Nehemiah had been praying for three or four months. From the month of Chisleu to the month of Nissan is roughly November to March. What this tells us is that though you may be praying fervently and effectually, you may need to persevere for God's timing. Some of you may be praying for things that are fully within God's will for you. Perhaps you want to get out of debt, get married, you want God to provide for a certain need, or you desire your family to come to Christ. These are things God wants you to pray for. So it is good not to grow weary and give in or give up. Why? Because you may be praying in God's will but you must wait on God's timing.

B. We get a **Broken Heart** through prayer. Look at **Nehemiah's Broken Heart** Nehemiah had a broken heart that he could not hide. He has never been **sad** in front of the king before. The reason is if you were with the king you had to be happy. Some of you have a boss like this. He wants you to be happy. He wants you to love the wonderful job you have at all times!

Now the king was loved and adored and some even worshipped him as a god. So when you were around the king you were supposed to be happy. There was another reason you should be happy. If you weren't, the king could decide to kill you. So that was a pretty good incentive to be happy.

So the king asked Nehemiah why he was sad. **Verse 2**, "Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is

nothing e/se but sorrow of heart...". Nehemiah had such a burden to see God's people gathered. It was something that consumed him. He wanted to see God's city built and God's people worshipping God and living out the truth of the Lord. There's a lot of work to be done. Nehemiah had the broken heart of Jesus. God's people were not encouraged. The Bible was not being taught. People in Jerusalem were not seeing their neighbors and friends come to know the Lord, they were simply surviving! Like Jesus, Nehemiah wept and prayed over Jerusalem. **God wants us to have this heart for our city!** We need to be broken and burdened that people in our city would meet Jesus Christ. We want Gospel preaching churches in our city and surrounding area to grow!

Nehemiah goes before the king, and Artaxerxes says, "you have a very sad face". Nehemiah is so burdened that he can no longer hide his pain and burden for the souls of his people.

There is such thing as a good and godly sorrow. We ought to first have that for our own sin and come to Jesus Christ for salvation ourselves. But then we must have that for our city.

Illustraton: George Whitefield Would Weep for Sinners

George Whitefield had a burden for souls. He stood on Boston Commons speaking to twenty thousand people and he said, "Listen sinners, you deserve Hell! And the worst of your crimes is that you haven't had the good grace to see it!" He said, "If you will not weep for your *sins* against a holy God, George Whitefield will weep for you!" Whitefield would put his head back and he would sob like a baby.

Nehemiah had a burden to build God's city in Jerusalem, and he could not hide his broken heart any more. He had likely been up many nights thinking and praying about what God would have him to do.

C. We get Boldness in prayer. Look at Nehemiah's Boldness

Nehemiah is about to take a great risk and make a request of the king. So the king asked Nehemiah why his face was sad, and Nehemiah's responded with great fear! He says in **verse 2b**, "Then I was very sore afraid".

1. When you get boldness in prayer, you are willing to **Risk** everything. You say with Paul, "I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ" (**Philippians 3:8**). You may feel afraid, but deep down you are willing to put that fear aside and do what God asks you to do.

Nehemiah's Risk.

Nehemiah was so burdened it made him bold and willing to take great risk. He could die if the king didn't like what he had to say. He says in **verse 2b**, "Then I was very sore afraid". He was extremely afraid. Being a leader means taking risks and at times it is a fearful thing. And Nehemiah was about to be extremely bold, but at times with that comes great fear. You know great leaders at times are very much afraid. They believe God, but the flesh can tremble even when the heart is secure in God. Nehemiah was so burdened and broken hearted that he was willing

to risk his life. What about you? Are you so burdened for those around you that you are willing to risk your comfort zone?

2. When you get boldness in prayer, you are willing to **Request** anything for God. Moses because he knew God could ask Pharaoh to let God's people go. Nehemiah is so burdened that he's willing to ask the king for permission to rebuild Jerusalem.

Nehemiah's Request

So Nehemiah responds to the king, **verse 3**, "And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" He says, listen, King, I'm not sad because of you—it has nothing to do with you. May you live forever! Then he explains that his city is in ruins, and someone needs to do something!

D. Now I want you to see the **By-product** of prayer. The main product of prayer is it changes you. But secondly, it changes those around you.

1. **Fervency** is a by-product of prayer. When you are praying you are intense and alive. Because of prayer Nehemiah had a great **fervency** for his city. Do you have a great burden for your city?

Nehemiah's city was in ruins, but he wanted to be there! Now there is not much attractive in our city. Downtown Chicago is nice to visit, but the weather around here is crazy. Half the year your basement floods and the other half of the year you risk your life on the roads while you freeze to death. If you don't like the weather in Chicago, just wait a few minutes. It will change. Why would anyone consciously want to live in Chicago? The people can be kind of "in your face". They tell it like it is. That seems harsh to some people. Listen folks, we are here not for the weather or even because the people are great. We are here because there are great sinners in this city and we have a great Savior. You are here because God's got a great vision for your town. He wants to build His city within your city.

2. God's **favor** is a by-product of prayer. Nehemiah could make this request because God has granted Nehemiah **favor** with the king.

Verse 4, "Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?" Nehemiah has an audience with the king. God has now granted him favor with the most powerful man in the world at this time.

Application: Where does favor come from? Does it come from our great plans? Does it come from our great power point? Our lists? Our blackberries and our Microsoft Word abilities? Does it come from our great personality? Some of you have all of that, and your plans for God go absolutely NO WHERE. Favor with men comes from fellowship with God. Favor is a by-product of prayer!

3. **Fellowship** with God is the most obvious by-product of prayer. Look at Nehemiah's **fellowship** with God. His fellowship with God was more important than his relationship with King Artaxerxes.

Verse 4, "So I prayed to the God of heaven". Before Nehemiah makes his request, he prays again to the God of heaven. He had prayed for three to four months. Now he is praying again. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing". As Christians we are in constant communication with our Father. Here's the important thing about prayer. If you are God's child, then He is your Father and He loves you.

Matthew 7:9-11, "what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Illustration: A good father has time for his children. A good father gets to liking playdough and jello and everything else the kids like. Why? Because he loves his children. We should be like that because God is like that. He is so important, yet He always is there for us. He condescends to us because he loves us. Don't ever think that God is not willing to hear your prayers. He wants to hear you.

Nehemiah could speak to the king because he was in loving fellowship with his Father in heaven.

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- I. God uses people in the **PLACE** that they are.
 - II. God uses people who **PRAY**.
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Conclusion: How about you? Do you have this idea that you have to be somewhere else for God to use you? No God will use you right in the Place where you are. But he will only use you as you Pray. You will be the kind of person with a backbone and a broken heart and boldness that goes forward to conquer this city for Jesus Christ, to build God's city within this city. Do you believe God can save your loved ones and friends? Go forward for God!