



## **Ingredients of a Godly Vision**

Chris Lindberg // Nehemiah 1:1-11

I'd like to take the time to read through Nehemiah's prayer in chapter one. It's important to remember that when we study Old Testament narratives, like Nehemiah, that we read it as history. Spiritual history. As Christians, this is OUR spiritual history. We should be careful not to read into the text, but rather read out of it.

When talking about Biblical narrative, Gordon Fee explains it like this. "the story they tell is not so much our story as it is God's story – and it becomes ours as he "writes" us into it."

Clearly Nehemiah was a man of prayer, and in the 4 verses that start this book we can see the anguish of Nehemiah's heart. He was a praying man. I've defined prayer before from this platform as an alignment of wills. Our will with God's will. Nehemiah's prayer life was so in tune with God that he mourned over the state of Jerusalem.

David Wilkerson's sermon *A Call To Anguish* teaches (and preaches!) from this same chapter in Nehemiah. Wilkerson says:

*"All true passion is born out of anguish. All true passion for Christ comes out of a baptism of anguish."*

Fast forward almost 500 years later and we see another man. Hours before being crucified.... crying out to God repeatedly through the night. Sweat and blood dripping from His hands as they're clenched in prayer.

### **Luke 22:44**

*And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

We can learn about the posture of Nehemiah's heart through the way that he prays. CCC over the past year/year and a half has become a much more praying church. I find it fascinating how God has led us to studies of prayers in the Bible. Our miniseries on the Lord's prayer, Paul's prayer to the Ephesians, and now in Nehemiah. I think there's something to learn here. I see Nehemiah's prayer broken down into four parts:

- Reverence
- Repentance
- Recollection
- Realignment

## Reverence

*<sup>5</sup> Then I said:*

*“Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <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.*

## Repentance

*I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, 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.*

## Recollection

*<sup>8</sup> “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.’*

*<sup>10</sup> “They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.*

## Realignment

*11 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.”*

Nehemiah prepared himself and his heart before God through prayer and fasting before boldly stepping over the threshold of fear into the king’s presence. Moreover, he was willing to leave the comfort and opulence of palace living and engage in the desperate brokenness of the world around him. As a result, he received God’s favor to see the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt and the people of the city restored.

**Big Idea: Nehemiah prayerfully surrendered to God to be sure that his plan aligned with God’s plan.**

Nehemiah surrendered in order to be used by God. And Jesus says that we are to do the same.

What are some things that we need to learn to surrender?

What about our:

- Understanding/Logic
- Expectations
- Comfort
- Success
- Pride
- Fears
- Reputation

There is a difference between *having* some of these things and *holding onto* some of these things.

1. Is it possible that holding onto these things impedes the opportunity to join in God’s mission?
2. How does holding onto these things affect our ability to have compassion for others?

Nehemiah's heart broke for God and for others.

There is nothing about the greatest commandment that is self-serving.

**Matthew 22:36-40**

<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Therefore, as disciples of Christ and just like Nehemiah, we too must count the cost and prayerfully surrender in order to be used by God. Jesus said, in

**Luke 14:33**

<sup>33</sup> *In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.*

We have the opportunity to join in the restoration of God's Kingdom here on earth until the day that He returns! Taking up our cross daily, for the sake of others, with a passion born out of anguish to see the broken healed!