



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN 2023

Nehemiah 1:1-11

- ***What would I like to see God do in, for and through my life and world in 2023?***
- **God wants to bless His people emotionally, financially, physically, relationally and vocationally (Jeremiah 29:11).**
- **God wants to bless His people in all kinds of ways - but His blessings in our lives are often tied to our spiritual passion, commitment and growth.**
 - Jesus - *“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”* (Matthew 6:33)
 - **Steps we can take to experience spiritual growth include: 1) Reading God’s Word and Praying daily (Acts 2:42), 2) Attending Church faithfully (Hebrews 10:25), 3) Serving the Lord and People regularly (Romans 12:11, 1 Peter 4:10), and 4) Participating in our Prayer and Fasting effort (www.celebrationchurch.org/prayerfasting).**
- **God wants to bless His people in many ways, but He also wants to work through His people to bless others and help the world (Nehemiah 1:1-11).**
- **Historical Perspective – 586 BC** - Jerusalem destroyed and many Jews deported to Babylon; **537 BC** - some Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem; **516 BC** - Temple was rebuilt; **458 BC** - Ezra led a group of Jews back to Jerusalem; **445 BC** - Nehemiah made aware of Jerusalem’s devastated walls and gates which left the Jews defenseless.
- **Nehemiah was a “cup-bearer” (butler) for the King of Persia until God called Him to a higher mission, and the same God who called Nehemiah to “make a difference” for good in his day, is calling us to “make a difference” in our day.**
- Nehemiah - *“The God of heaven will help us succeed.”* (Nehemiah 2:20)
- ***What steps do I need to take to discover how God wants to work through me to make a difference for good and for God in the world around me?***

Making A Difference For Good And For God Requires:

CARING ABOUT HURTING PEOPLE

- *“In the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes’ reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. Hanani . . . came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem. They said to me, ‘Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.’”* (Nehemiah 1:1-3)
- **Nehemiah was concerned about the Jews residing in Jerusalem in those days who were hurting and distraught because they had no protection from evil people.**
- **Hurting people are all around us in our day and time – people with broken hearts, broken lives, broken perspectives, broken relationships, etc.**
- **Jesus went around doing good and helping hurting people (Matthew 4:35, Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38), and we’re supposed to love and act like Jesus.**
- ***What People am I most concerned about and what am I willing to do to help them?***
- *“God will not forget how hard you have worked for Him and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for others.”* (Hebrews 6:10)

Making A Difference For Good And For God Requires:

DEDICATING OURSELVES TO PRAYER

- *“When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.”* (Nehemiah 1:4)
- **Nehemiah prayed during the day and night for 4 months when he heard about the problems in Jerusalem, and he prayed 9 different times in this Book.**
- **Praying faithfully: 1) shows our dependence on the Lord (John 15:5), 2) connects us with God’s presence, power and provision (Matthew 7:7-11), 3) provides us with direction (Jeremiah 33:3), and 4) brings strength to our lives (Isaiah 40:31).**
- **Nehemiah was a man of action - a leader who was an organizer, motivator and manager - but more than that he was a man of prayer.**
- **Effective Praying requires *Placing our Trust in God’s Character.***
 - Nehemiah - *“O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps His covenant of un failing love with those who love Him and obey His commands, listen to my prayer!”* (Nehemiah 1:5-6)
 - **Nehemiah began his prayer by: 1) acknowledging God’s position** (the “God of heaven”), **2) affirming God’s power** (the “great and awesome God”) **and 3) articulating His belief in the Lord** (“who keeps His covenant of un failing love with those who love Him and obey His commands”).
- **Effective Praying requires *Praying Faithfully and Fervently.***
 - Nehemiah - *“Look down and see me praying night and day for Your people Israel.”* (Nehemiah 1:6)
 - ***What does my daily prayer schedule look like, and who am I praying for?***
 - *“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”* (James 5:16)
- **Effective Praying requires *Confessing the Sin in our Lives.***

- Nehemiah - *“I confess that we have sinned against You. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that You gave us.”* (Nehemiah 1:6-7)
- **The closer we get to the Lord the more aware we become of our sinfulness, and our need for God’s forgiveness and graciousness.**
- *“People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13)
- **Effective Praying requires *Claiming God’s Promises.***
 - Nehemiah - *“Please remember what You told Your servant Moses: ‘If you are unfaithful to Me, I will scatter you among the nations. But if you return to Me and obey My commands and live by them . . . I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for My name to be honored.’”* (Nehemiah 1:8-9)
 - **God doesn’t have to be reminded about promises He’s made to His people, but doing so helps us remember, trust in and act upon His promises.**
 - The Lord - *“If you look for Me wholeheartedly, you will find Me. I will be found by you. . . . I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes.”* (Jeremiah 29:12-14)
 - The Lord - *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in My Temple. If you do, . . . I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in!”* (Malachi 3:10)
 - **The strength of our prayer life will be enhanced when we know God’s promises and believe that He will keep them (Psalm 145:13).**
- **Effective Praying requires *Praying for Specific Needs.***
 - Nehemiah - *“O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring You. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.”* (Nehemiah 1:10-11)
 - **Nehemiah prayed for the specific needs of specific people, and prayed with faith for a need only the Persian king could grant.**
 - ***What are some specific and bold needs I need to be praying for in regards to my life, my family, our Church, our region, our nation and our world?***
 - Jesus - *“If you being evil men know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give to those who ask Him?”* (Matthew 7:11)
- ***What do I need to do to strengthen my prayer life and connection with the Lord?***

Making A Difference For Good And For God Requires:

COMMITTING TO BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION

- Nehemiah - *“Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.”* (Nehemiah 1:11)
- **Nehemiah not only cared and prayed about the plight of the people in Jerusalem, but he was willing to be a part of the solution to bringing help and hope to them.**
- *“It would be no surprise if a study of secret causes were undertaken to find that in every Golden Era of human history it proceeds from the devotion and righteous passion of a single individual. There are no bona fide mass movements; it just looks that way. At the center of the column there will always be one person who knows his God and knows where he is going.”* (Richard Elworth Day, *Filled With The Spirit*)

- Nehemiah to the Opposition - *“The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, His servants, will start rebuilding this wall.”* (Nehemiah 2:20)
- **When we care about hurting people, pray like Nehemiah prayed, and seek to be a part of the solution, Lord will grant us much success in our lives and ministries.**
- *“God is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”* (Ephesians 3:20)
- **FOLLOW-UP ASSIGNMENT**
 - **Answer the Question - *If I could do anything to help people and make a difference in the world, what would I be doing for God and for others?***
 - **Write Out A Prayer List - include on it the people, relationships and situations you will be praying for during our *Prayer And Fasting* time.**
 - **Determine how and when you’re going to “fast” and “pray” for the next 14 days (www.celebrationchurch.org/prayerfasting).**