

Sermon Study Guide

Sunday September 1, 2024 | Nehemiah 1:1-11 | “A Season To Restructure”

Point #1 Recognizing the Problem

Introduction:

Nehemiah asked a critical question, “How are things going?” This question is not just about the physical state of things but delves deeper into our spiritual, emotional, and personal lives. To rebuild or restructure anything, we must first recognize the problem. This guide will help you reflect on your personal life and the broader community.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Nehemiah’s Inquiry:

- What question did Nehemiah ask, and why is it significant?
- How can asking, “How are things going?” impact both your personal life and your community?

2. Personal Reflection:

- Be honest with yourself: How are things going in your life?
 - Spiritually?
 - Emotionally?
 - Mentally?
 - Physically?
 - Relationally (Maritally or Singly)?
 - Financially?
 - Socially?
 - Educationally?
- How does your answer reflect your current state in the “house” of your personal life and in your spiritual home (church)?

3. Value Assessment:

- Is your involvement in your church or community adding value to your life?
- Are you growing and developing spiritually and personally?

- Are you being transformed into the image of God through this ministry?

4. Recognizing the Problem:

- Why is recognizing a problem the first key to restructuring and rebuilding?
- What are some ways people avoid recognizing problems in their lives (e.g., denial, avoidance)?
- How can avoiding the recognition of problems lead to greater issues (e.g., “swimming in the waters of denial”)?

5. The Consequences of Avoidance:

- What are the risks of “swimming in the waters of denial”?
- What does it mean to have “problematic piles of postponed problems”?
- How can unaddressed issues affect your overall well-being?

6. Taking Ownership:

- What does Nehemiah’s response to the report about Jerusalem’s condition teach us about recognizing both external and internal problems?
- Why is taking responsibility crucial before any restructuring or rebuilding can occur?
- How can you begin to take ownership of the issues in your life?

7. Pinpointing the Problem:

- What does it mean to “diagnose the dilemma thoroughly”?
- How can pinpointing a problem precisely help in the process of restructuring?

8. Action Steps:

- Reflect on an area in your life where you have recognized a problem. What steps can you take to address it?
- What is one thing you can start doing today to take responsibility for your actions and outcomes?

Conclusion:

Recognizing the problem is the first and most crucial step in the journey to rebuilding and restructuring your life, your home, and your community. Honest reflection and taking responsibility pave the way for transformation and growth.

Point #2 Weaponize Prayer

Introduction:

After recognizing the problem, Nehemiah turns to a powerful weapon—prayer. Prayer is not just a routine or ritual; it is the first step in any process of restructuring, rebuilding, or refining. Nehemiah understood that real change starts from the inside out and is powered by the presence of God. This guide will help you explore the importance of prayer as a foundational tool for transformation.

Questions for Reflection:

1. The Foundation of Prayer:

- Why does Nehemiah choose to begin with prayer after recognizing the problem?
- What does it mean to “weaponize prayer”? How can prayer be considered a weapon?

2. Starting the Right Way:

- Why is it important to start with prayer rather than with physical actions or plans?
- How does starting with prayer realign your heart before using your hands?
- What is the significance of starting the restructuring process from the spiritual rather than the physical?

3. The Power of Prayer:

- List at least three things that prayer can do, according to the study content. How have you experienced any of these in your life?
- How does prayer penetrate problems and provide peace, purpose, and perspective?

- How does prayer pave pathways and provoke powerful progress in difficult situations?

4. Purpose and Protection Through Prayer:

- What does it mean when the guide says that prayer “pleads for provision” and “protects against pitfalls”?
- How does prayer produce profound change in a person’s life?
- In what ways can prayer push back against doubt and pull down strongholds?

5. Prayer as a Practice:

- How does prayer plant seeds of faith and propel us into purpose?
- What does it mean for prayer to put us in God’s presence and partner us with His plan?
- Can you recall a time when prayer helped you align with God’s purpose?

6. Nehemiah’s Dependence on God:

- Why did Nehemiah turn to God in prayer when faced with the crumbling condition of Jerusalem?
- What does Nehemiah’s prayer reveal about his dependence on God’s strength, strategy, and structure for his mission?
- How can we learn from Nehemiah’s example of seeking divine direction through prayer?

7. The Supernatural Power of God:

- How does prayer connect us to God’s unlimited power when our natural abilities fall short?
- Reflect on the statement: “Where your power shuts off, God’s power kicks off.” How does this apply to your current challenges?
- What does it mean for God to be “El Shaddai, the God of More Than Enough”? How does this name of God influence your prayer life?

8. Inviting and Igniting Through Prayer:

- How does prayer invite the presence of God into your situation?

- In what ways does prayer ignite the power of God over your circumstances?
- What areas of your life need restructuring, realigning, or refining, and how can prayer initiate that process?

9. Practical Application:

- Identify a problem or area in your life that needs change. How can you begin to weaponize prayer in that area?
- What is one specific prayer strategy you can implement this week to invite God's presence and power into your situation?

Conclusion:

Prayer is not just a passive act; it is a powerful tool that initiates transformation. As Nehemiah shows us, before any physical rebuilding can occur, we must first rebuild spiritually. Weaponize prayer in every aspect of your life and watch how God's power propels you into purpose.

Point #3 Internalize a Heart for Change

Introduction:

Nehemiah's story teaches us about the importance of internalizing a heart for change. He was not content with personal comfort while his community suffered. Despite his position as a cupbearer to the king, Nehemiah's heart was deeply burdened for his people, prompting him to action. This guide explores how we can allow God to place a burden for restructuring in our hearts and become catalysts for change.

Questions for Reflection:

1. The Burden to Rebuild:

- Why did Nehemiah feel such a strong burden to rebuild and restructure, despite his comfortable position as a cupbearer?
- How does Nehemiah's reaction to the news of Jerusalem's condition demonstrate his commitment to communal well-being?
- Reflect on the statement: "If I'm good but you're not good, we not good." How does this perspective challenge individualistic thinking?

2. Nehemiah's Response:

- According to Nehemiah 1:4, what were Nehemiah's immediate reactions upon hearing about the state of Jerusalem?
- How do mourning, fasting, and prayer reflect Nehemiah's heart for change?
- What does Nehemiah's prayer in verse 11 reveal about his dependence on God for success?

3. A Heart of Compassion:

- How did Nehemiah demonstrate compassion for his fellow Jews?
- What does it mean to feel someone else's pain as your own, and why is this crucial for initiating change?
- Can you recall a time when someone else's suffering moved you to action? What did you do?

4. A Sense of Responsibility:

- Despite his comfortable position, Nehemiah did not ignore the plight of his people. What does this teach us about true leadership?
- How does Nehemiah's sense of communal responsibility contrast with the attitude of ignoring problems because they don't directly affect us?
- In what areas of your life or community do you feel a sense of responsibility to act?

5. The Divine Calling:

- Nehemiah's burden was more than just an emotional response; it was a call from God. How can you discern the difference between an emotional impulse and a divine calling?
- How did Nehemiah's prayers reflect his understanding of God's greater plan for Jerusalem?
- Why is it important to align our burdens with God's purposes when pursuing change?

6. Desire for Restoration and Revival:

- What did Nehemiah hope to achieve through the rebuilding of Jerusalem beyond just restoring its physical walls?

- How are the broken walls of Jerusalem symbolic of a deeper need for spiritual renewal among God's people?
- Reflect on areas in your life or community where physical needs might point to deeper spiritual issues that need addressing.

7. Practical Application:

- Nehemiah allowed his burden to move him to action. What burdens has God placed on your heart that you need to act on?
- What steps can you take today to internalize a heart for change in your family, community, or church?
- How can you make prayer a central part of your response to the burdens you feel?

8. Aligning with God's Purpose:

- How can we seek God's direction when we feel a burden for change?
- What role does prayer play in aligning our desires with God's will?
- Share an example of how God has used a burden in your heart to bring about positive change.

Conclusion:

Nehemiah's story challenges us to internalize a heart for change, allowing God to place a burden in our hearts that moves us to action. True transformation begins when we are stirred by compassion, driven by responsibility, and aligned with God's divine calling. Let Nehemiah's example inspire you to become a catalyst for restoration and revival in your own context.
