

When God Calls a Man (Part 1)

Nehemiah: Cupbearer to the King



Discipleship Groups

Sermon Dates:
**April 15 & 16
2023**

Butch Gastfield

Scripture Text
Nehemiah 1:1-2:8

BACKGROUND

In 597 B.C, the Babylonians, under King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took many of the inhabitants into exile.

Read 2 Kings 24:10-14

Zedekiah became king of Judah, but a decade later, he rebelled against the Babylonians, and this time (586 B.C.) the armies of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem, burned the Temple, and took captive all but the poorest of the citizens who were left to work the land.

Read 2 Kings 25:11-12

But God does not abandon His people, nor does He leave them without hope. Jeremiah was prophesying among the people at that time proclaiming a message of deliverance.

QUESTIONS:

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14

- Can you point to anything in this passage that might explain God's reason for extending their exile?
- Is there any "catch" to the promise He gives? If so, what is it?
- What are some of the promises we have today through our Savior, Jesus?
- What parallels do you find in this passage to the nature of our interactions with Jesus as we travel our discipleship pathway?

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION

As Butch pointed out, two waves of exiles had returned to Jerusalem by this time, and Ezra had reinstituted the Temple worship. Still, work on the restoration of the city wall had ceased.

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4

- Are there things or events that we observe that have driven us to mourn to the degree that Nehemiah did?
- If not, (and assuming there are things worthy of some level of mourning) what does your mourning look like?

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By comparing *Nehemiah 1:1* with *Nehemiah 2:1*, we know that the period of prayer and fasting took place over a four-month period before the king questioned Nehemiah about his demeanor.

QUESTIONS:

- Are there things you have prayed/are praying about over an extended period? How has that experience impacted your spiritual growth? In what ways has it deepened your relationship with God? How has your attitude toward the situation you prayed about been modified?
- Why are we so often prone to ceasing our prayers when we don't recognize results quickly?
- It appears that Nehemiah was praying in preparation to making a request of the king. Can you share about a time that you prayed before embarking on a major decision? In reflecting on that occasion, how do you see God's hand guiding the outcome?
- Have you found yourself trying to solve a difficult situation or accomplish an important ministry objective first, and only praying about it as a last resort when your efforts were ineffective?

QUESTIONS:

Read Nehemiah 1:5-11

- How many different *elements/components* can you identify in this prayer? (He begins with praise.)
- Discuss each of these components and consider how Nehemiah's prayer presents an excellent working model for any/all our prayers.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Butch strongly emphasized prayer as a first order of business when God calls a man to leadership, and he asked the men of our congregation to pray, "*Lord, I'm willing to be a conduit through whom You can accomplish what You want to accomplish.*" That can easily be a prayer for any disciple of Jesus.

- Are you willing to pray this over the coming months as Fairway's *Forward Initiative* unfolds and God brings new unseen opportunities for ministry and service to us?