

Introduction

- Ongoing argument with Staci about Sound of Music - war movie or not? She wants me to share her love for the movie, I don't care about the movie. Staci wants me to care about the things she cares about because the people you love care about the things you care about.
- You know God loves you, and you profess to love God. But... do you care about what God cares about? Do you love the things God loves? Do you hate the things God hates?
- God is deeply concerned about the spiritual brokenness that sin has brought into this world. God's concern for our spiritual brokenness is seen clearly seen at the cross. He loved this broken world so much that He sent His Son to die in our place only to rise again on the third day so we could be made new.
- Do you care? Do you care about what sin has done to the people you love? Do you care about what sin is doing to your family? Do you care that churches are drifting from God's Word? Do you care about what spiritual brokenness is doing to our city?
- This morning, we're beginning the Book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah continues the story of Ezra. [Nehemiah 1](#) takes place almost 100 years after the first wave of Israelites return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity.
- 100 years later,, the temple had been rebuilt, but the city was still in ruins. The broken walls of Jerusalem were a visual reminder of a broken people who desperately needed renewal.

- [Nehemiah 1:1-11](#) challenges us to respond to the spiritual brokenness that surrounds us. I want you to see two challenges from this passage.

Fight the temptation to ignore spiritual brokenness (vs. 1-4).

- We don't know much about Nehemiah other than he was the son of Hacaliah. He was a child during the time of Ezra. His whole life was spent in Persia after Babylon had been defeated and the exile was over. He had never been to Jerusalem.
- In Persia, Nehemiah was committed to Yahweh. He was a man of faith, and he was a man who found himself in the king's service.
- vs. 11 - Cupbearer to the king - don't know how he got to that position, but a position of influence. His job to taste the wine of the king to protect the king from being poisoned. He was close to the king. He had the king's ear. In [Nehemiah 2](#), obvious that God placed Nehemiah in this position for such a time as this.
- Nehemiah was surrounded by loyalty and luxury - 900 miles away from Jerusalem and all of the problems of the Israelites.
- vs. 2 - When Nehemiah's brother comes to Susa, Nehemiah asks about the Jewish remnant, and Hanani delivers bad news.
- vs. 3 - The city was in great trouble - The people were struggling. The city had no walls - no fortification - open to the attacks of the enemy.
- vs. 3 - The people were disgraced. They were opposed and insulted. At one time, Israel was prosperous and powerful, now they were ridiculed. This isn't the way it was supposed to be!
- vs. 4 - Nehemiah moved by the news. Nehemiah had every reason to ignore Jerusalem. He had never lived there. He had a prestigious

position. He lived in the luxury of the Persian palace. Yet one report was enough to break his heart.

- The Israelites desperately needed God to renew them, and Nehemiah knew it.
- Fight the temptation to ignore spiritual brokenness. We want to pretend like everything is alright, or we want to stick our head in the sand and not deal with the devastation that wreaks havoc on this world as a result of sin. There's a real temptation to ignore spiritual brokenness.
- Two questions:
- **Why do we ignore spiritual brokenness?**
 - Spiritual complacency
 - Comfortable lives - don't want to be inconvenienced by the problems of this world.
 - We have our own problems to deal with, no time to worry about the problems of others.
 - Feel powerless - what can we do about it?
 - Focused on self - trying to accomplish our goals - don't want to be burdened by the sins of others.
 - Spiritually numb - so used to sin that it doesn't phase us.
- **What should break our hearts?**
 - People far from Christ. (Number of healthy churches to reach them.)
 - Churches drifting from the truth. (Instead, churches get caught up in gossip, scandals, sexual immorality, etc.)
 - Families being destroyed by sin. (Lack of fathers making Christ the priority, divorce, sexual immorality, pornography and abuse not uncommon in Christian homes.)

- A culture that rejects God's design. (Redefining marriage and family, abortion, injustice, next generation being discipled by social media.) Our hearts are not broken enough over these things - we tend to ignore or overlook because of spiritual complacency or because we're overly focused on our own lives.
- Simple prayer: "God, break my heart over the things that break your heart." Consistently praying that prayer will lead you to action.

Fight the temptation to respond to spiritual brokenness apart from God.

- Nehemiah knows the problem, and if he were like many of us, he would have immediately began strategizing and developing plan.
- But, Nehemiah doesn't sit down with pen and paper and start sketching blueprints for new walls. He doesn't start strategizing about how to raise the money to fund the building project.
- Instead, he turns to the Lord. In his grief over Jerusalem and the struggles the people are experience, Nehemiah goes to the Lord.
- What if your first response to life's challenges was to turn to the Lord? Our first response isn't usually dependence on God, it's self-reliance.
- We want to turn to our own wisdom, or our own abilities instead of turning to the One who can actually change our lives.
- How often do we plan before we pray? Lean on our wisdom instead of asking God's wisdom? Complain about the problems of the world instead of interceding for sinners?
- Last week, we looked at Ezra's prayer when he was overwhelmed by the sins of the Israelites. Now, Nehemiah's prayer.
- Nehemiah's prayer helps us know how to come before God.

- Nehemiah starts with adoration. vs. 5 - “Great and awe-inspiring God.” Nehemiah doesn’t begin with the problem. He begins with God. He knows God is bigger than any problem that Israel will experience.
- One of the ways I learned to pray was the acronym ACTS - adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. Nehemiah’s prayer follows a similar pattern. He praises God for who He is.
- Nehemiah confesses. Like Ezra, Nehemiah identifies with the people of Israel. He doesn’t point the finger. He humbly says, “We have sinned.”
- Nehemiah prays for his people (vs. 8-10), but he does so by appealing to the promises of God. Nehemiah fully aware that God had promised to bring the people back to the land. Nehemiah praying with confidence because he knows the faithfulness of God. He knows God will keep His word. “Lord, remember what you promised us...”
- Nehemiah prayed and then acted. vs. 11 - “Give your servant success...” Chapter 2 is going to specifically show Nehemiah acting in faith, but he prays before he acts.
- Nehemiah doesn’t respond to spiritual brokenness apart from God’s help. He depends on God’s help.
- Nehemiah’s prayer challenges us in two ways:
- **Pray Scripture over your family, your church, and your world everyday.**
 - Nothing enriches your prayer life like praying God’s Word.
 - Requires you actually knowing God’s Word so you can pray with confidence over broken situations.
 - E.g.,
 - Marriage: Think about how praying Scripture over broken situations: “God you know my marriage is on the rocks, but your word says to

put on compassion, kindness, gentleness, and patience, bear with one another and forgive” ([Colossians 3:12-14](#)).

- Lostness in our city: “Lord, send more faithful witness into our city, and may I be one of them” ([Matthew 9:37-38](#)).
- Broken justice system: “Your Kingdom come, your will be done...” [Matthew 6:10](#). Or, “You’ve promised new heaven and new earth. Lord Jesus come” ([Revelation 21](#)).
- Praying God’s Word brings your heart into alignment with God’s desires and gives you confidence before God.
- **Act on how God has burdened your heart.**
- Don’t miss this: prayer prepared Nehemiah for action (Chapter 2).
- There’s one mission that we’re all responsible for. We’re all called to make disciples of all nations, but our hearts might be burdened for different people in different situations because of our experiences, our spiritual giftedness, or our passions.
- How is God calling you to act? Maybe you have a burden for the unborn and the sinful taking of unborn lives. How is God calling you to act? To volunteer time at a pregnancy center?
- Maybe you are burdened for broken families. You long to see marriages restored. Could you serve as a mentor for a couple that’s going through a challenging season?
- Maybe you’re burdened for those who are being discipled by their phones. How will you disciple them to follow the Lord?
- Beauty of the body of Christ - we might not all be burdened in the same way. Some are burdened for the unborn. Some for marriages. Some for international missions. Some for students. Some for church planting. That's the beauty of Different burdens yet one mission - to

see every our city and our world saturated with the good news of Jesus Christ.

- Pray, listen to the Lord, and act.
- When Nehemiah heard about Jerusalem, he left the comfort of the palace because he loved God's people. That's only a shadow of what Jesus has done for us. Jesus didn't merely hear about our brokenness. He entered it. He left heaven, took on flesh, bore our sin, died on the cross and rose again to make broken sinners new.
- Jesus didn't come to build a wall, He came to build a family by dying for people who had rebelled against the God of all creation only to rise again three days later so our sins could be forgiven and we could be adopted into the Family of God.
- Jesus didn't ignore our condition. He came to change our condition. Through His death and resurrection, He has made us new. If you do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life, turn from your sins and trust Him today.