

# WHAT COULD GOD DO?

## NEHEMIAH 1:1-4

### CHURCH GROUP SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE - FEBRUARY 11, 2024

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#### SCRIPTURE READING

##### *Nehemiah 1:1-4 ESV*

*1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.*

*Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." 4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*

#### ICE BREAKER QUESTION

What current global, local, and/or personal concerns seem hopeless or insurmountable to you right now?

#### SERMON RECAP

What could God do through McLean Bible Church, and through you?

- The LORD has worked in powerful ways throughout our church's history ... and He is not done. What could God do in our church now?
- In every generation, God places His people in strategic positions, including secular jobs, as representatives of His kingdom. There are approximately 5.6 million people in the Washington D.C. metro area who are considered unchurched. They may not be close to God, ... but they are close to you. What could God do in our city?
- We live in a world full of urgent physical and spiritual need. There are over 3 billion people who are unreached, having minimal, if any, access to the gospel. What could God do around the world?
- And what could God do through your life?

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### **Observation: What does the passage say?**

1. Read Nehemiah 1:1-4 aloud as a group. Before interpreting or applying the passage, share observations about it.
  - For the ancient Jews, Jerusalem was "the city of David," the holy headquarters of God's presence among His people. So, the wall around this city not only provided needed security to Israel; it also represented the national and spiritual identity of that covenant community.
    - In this passage, what was the focus of Nehemiah's concern? (Nehemiah 1:2)
    - What news did Nehemiah receive about the Jews who had escaped and survived the exile, and Jerusalem? (Nehemiah 1:3)
    - Upon hearing the news that this wall was broken down, what were Nehemiah's responses?
  - Following Israel's return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile, what was Nehemiah's position in the king's court? (Nehemiah 1:1, 11)
2. How would you explain or summarize today's scriptures in your own words?

##### **Interpretation: What does the passage mean?**

1. Nehemiah was of Jewish lineage, born during Israel's exile in Babylon. After returning to Jerusalem, he became one of the highest and most trusted officials in the king's court. What might be the significance of these details in the book of Nehemiah?
2. Why might Nehemiah have reacted as he did to the news about the state of Jerusalem's wall?
3. Reread Nehemiah 1:3a. God's chosen people were not just living in grave danger - they were also living in global disgrace. What might these burned and broken walls have communicated to the pagans, not just about Israel, but about

their God?

**Application: How can we apply this passage to our lives?**

1. We live in a world full of urgent physical and spiritual needs. Within our church, people need to be disciplined, marriages that need to be supported, ministries that need to be organized, those struggling with sin and brokenness need support, and more. Reflect on this for a moment, and then consider the following questions?
2. Are there any areas of urgent need you've observed in our city or in the world that have stirred a deep "Nehemiah-like" burden in your soul?
  - What could God do in and through our church?
  - What could God do in our city?
  - What could God do around the world?
  - What could God do through your life?
3. Honestly - and without fear - take inventory of your gifts, abilities, and resources. If you were willing to step out in faith and make yourself available to the LORD to build something that might outlast you and bring Him glory for generations to come, a) what might you do, and b) what might God do through that?
4. Are there any areas of your life where you're currently struggling to step out in faith in order to be used by God?
5. Take time to pray along each of the following lines:
  - "God, make us a church that is confident in Your Word and passionate about Your presence ..."
  - "God, make us a church of radical devotion and radical grace ..."
  - "God, make us a church of justice and generosity ..."
  - "God, make us a church that expresses diversity as we experience unity ..."
  - "God, make us a church that welcomes and mobilizes all generations and intentionally reaches the next generation ..."

**LEADER NOTES**

**SHARE YOUR STORY** | God is moving and working in our church family in so many unique, specific ways during 21 Days of Prayer! God can encourage, unify, and edify His church through the work He is doing in others' lives, but we need you to help capture those stories. If you know a story or want to share yours, please share it here: [mcleanbible.org/stories/](http://mcleanbible.org/stories/)

**ALL-LOCATION LATE NIGHT PRAYER GATHERING** | Join us for a time of extended prayer and worship on Friday, March 1 at 7 pm! As a church family, we will gather on our knees and seek the Lord, in humility, for what He alone wants to accomplish, in us and through us, both corporately and personally. Meet in the Smith Center at MBC Tysons (Door 2, Lower Level).

**ATTACHMENT**

**You can use the following questions to dig more into the context that Ezra and Nehemiah were written.**

What led to the Israelite's exile from and return to the Promised Land?

1. In Leviticus 26, God made it clear what would happen if Israel disobeyed His commands. He promised blessing for obedience, and curses/consequences for disobedience. Read Leviticus 26:27-36 to see how God promised exile and dispersion as part of those consequences.
2. Israel was commanded to give sabbath rest to the land every seven years (Leviticus 25:1-7). For 490 years, Israel ignored that command. Do the math: how many sabbath years were missing? (answer: 70 sabbath years)
3. The Southern Kingdom of Judah fell in 605 B.C. Beginning with the prophet Daniel and his friends. In 597 B.C. Ezekiel and 10,000 others were taken captive. Finally, in 538 B.C. the temple was destroyed, and the rest of Judah was taken captive. Even so, the LORD promised that the people would return from exile after 70 years. Read Jeremiah 29:4-14 to see that promise.
4. The LORD promised that the Temple would be rebuilt, and even identified which Persian King would make that return possible! Read the prophecy in Isaiah 44:24-45:7 and see its fulfillment in Ezra 1:1-4.