

Life Group Homework

For the week of February 4, 2018

MY STORY

- 1) What was your takeaway from last week's study?
- 2) In what ways did you find fresh vision from God for your life?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) Upon reviewing your notes from Sunday's teaching, what caught your attention?

DIGGING DEEPER

Nehemiah 2:1-10 (NLT)

Early the following spring, in the month of Nisan, during the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was serving the king his wine. I had never before appeared sad in his presence. ²So the king asked me, "Why are you looking so sad? You don't look sick to me. You must be deeply troubled."

Then I was terrified, ³but I replied, "Long live the king! How can I not be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been destroyed by fire."

⁴The king asked, "Well, how can I help you?"

With a prayer to the God of heaven, ⁵I replied, "If it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

⁶The king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked, "How long will you be gone? When will you return?" After I told him how long I would be gone, the king agreed to my request.

⁷I also said to the king, "If it please the king, let me have letters addressed to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, instructing them to let me travel safely through their territories on my way to Judah. ⁸And please give me a letter addressed to Asaph, the manager of the king's forest, instructing him to give me timber. I will need it to make beams for the gates of the Temple fortress, for the city walls, and for a house for myself." And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me.

⁹When I came to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, I delivered the king's letters to them. The king, I should add, had sent along army officers and horsemen to protect me. ¹⁰But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of my arrival, they were very displeased that someone had come to help the people of Israel.

- 4) Last Sunday Pastor Craig taught us that in Nehemiah's culture entering the king's presence while sad could be punished by death. What did Nehemiah do in the opening verses of this chapter, and what was the king's response?

- 5) Over the next two verses we see the interaction between the king and Nehemiah. There is something significant that could be easily missed in

reading this passage—it is found in Verse 4. What did Nehemiah do before he answered the king?

- 6) Why is Nehemiah's pausing to pray significant, and what can we learn from this action?

Let's unpack this scene for a moment. Nehemiah spent a chunk of time grieving, praying and fasting for Jerusalem. He makes the mistake of entering the king's presence sad. He is fully aware of the possible consequences of the king's question about being sad. But he has a clear vision in his heart of what he wants from the king, because he has sat with the "if God" possibilities. He has dreamed the God-sized possibilities. When the king asks him what he wants, he pauses for a moment and prays before he speaks. That "pause and prayer" is HUGE!

- 7) What situations in your life would benefit from pausing and praying before you speak?
- 8) Let's be honest for a moment. Pausing and praying before we speak could be a game-changer for many of us. Let unpack some of the "what ifs" for a moment. What would your life look like if you paused and prayed before you spoke?
- 9) What kinds of prayers would you say?

TAKING IT HOME

Nehemiah 1:4-10 (NLT)

When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said,

"O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unending love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! ⁷We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

⁸"Please remember what you told your servant Moses: 'If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. ⁹But if you return to me and obey my commands and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored.'

¹⁰"The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants.

¹¹O 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."

- 10) From the passage above, what had Nehemiah done to prepare for his conversation with the king?

- 11) Have you ever walked into circumstances with this kind of preparation? What was it, and what was the result?

One really important point we want to emphasize is that Nehemiah did some things well.

- He allowed his heart to be broken for something that broke God's heart.
- He dealt with his own flaws instead of blaming others.
- He laid the ground work for his conversation with the king through prayer and fasting.
- He had a strategy or a plan to present to the king.
- He prayed for a favorable disposition from the king concerning his cause.
- When the opportunity came with the king, he paused and prayed before he spoke.

12) What is the application for us in his example?

13) What can you do this week to apply what you have learned?

CHAIR TIME TOOL

Read Nehemiah Chapter 1-2

14) What is your takeaway from these chapters?

15) Look for opportunities this week and practice the concept of “pause and pray, then respond.”

FAMILY RESOURCES

Like Nehemiah, we all have situations that grieve us and so do your kids. Your preschoolers are learning how to share, take turns and follow classroom rules. Your elementary kids are questioning whether or not they have what it takes to succeed in school, and they are yearning for good friends. Whereas, your middle schoolers are discovering who they are, and your high schoolers are grappling with where they belong and how they can meaningfully contribute to the world.

Take some time this week, either at dinner or bedtime, to sit down with your kids and read Nehemiah 1: 4-10 and Nehemiah 2: 1-10. Then, answer the following questions as a family.

16) What did Nehemiah do after he learned about the wall?

17) Why do you think that Nehemiah wept?

18) What does this say about Nehemiah's heart?

19) What situations in your life or the world break your heart?

20) How can you help to improve those situations?



TO THE POSSIBILITIES

FEBRUARY 4, 2018 | PASTOR CRAIG SWEENEY

BIG Question: Am I **positioned** to live God's vision?

Take a closer look.

Step 1: You

- What am I **resisting**?
- What am I saying “**NO**” to?
- What am I saying “**YES**” to?
- What needs to **STOP**?
- What needs to **START**?

Step 2: Others

- Who can **HELP** me? Coffee sounds good! 2:12 “*I set out...with a few others...*”
- Who do I need to **SERVE**?
- Who do I need to **RECONCILE** with? (*make peace with*)

Step 3: Faith/Trust

- TRUST God with/for the **impossible**.
- Hebrews 11:1 “*Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.*”

Proverbs 16:3 “Commit (surrender) your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed.”

Proverbs 16:9 “We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.”

CHALLENGE: In your Chair Time answer the questions from Steps 1, 2 & 3.

If you are on Instagram follow Craig Sweeney at SweeneyCraigie. I would like for you to post back to me “HOW” you're answering these questions. I might share your responses anonymously.