



# MESSAGE GUIDE

For Sept. 14,  
2025



Nehemiah 1:1-2:8  
**Rick Grover,**  
**LEAD PASTOR**

## STORYTELLER - 6: WHEN IT'S TIME TO REBUILD

We are in the last week of our series called, “Storyteller”, based on the third part of the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. Matthew divides Jesus’ family tree into three parts—Abraham to David, David to the Babylonian Exile, and the Babylonian Exile to Jesus. In the previous two sections, we spent time unpacking stories of the individuals and what difference that makes to us. In this third part, we’re unpacking stories of those who endured the Babylonian Exile: Esther, Daniel, and, last week and today, Nehemiah.

Recap of this historical timeline:

- Daniel: Taken to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonian Empire (587 B.C.)
- Esther: Becomes queen of King Xerxes (478 B.C.)
- Nehemiah: King Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls (444 B.C.)

Why are we going over this? Because it’s a great way for us to learn more of the history of the OT leading up to the birth of Christ. And we’re connecting these stories to our stories, which helps us connect to God’s story. So, how do we connect with Nehemiah? After all, Nehemiah describes himself very simply this way: “Now I was cupbearer to the king.” (Nehemiah 1:11, ESV)

### 1. WHAT IS THE RISKIEST JOB OR EVEN JUST RISKY TASK YOU’VE EVER HAD TO DO?

As a cupbearer, Nehemiah had a high-risk job. A Cupbearer is a slave who had the great fortune—which could also be the great curse—of tasting the food and sipping the wine given to the king to make sure it didn’t possess any poison. And the only way the king and his court would know if the food and wine were safe is if the cupbearer didn’t keel over dead.

What else do we know about Nehemiah? Well, we know, based on Nehemiah, 1, that he served King Artaxerxes, king of the Persian Empire. We know Nehemiah was a slave in exile. And we know that King Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah back to Jerusalem to oversee the rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall.

**Read Nehemiah 1:1-3.**

Do you see the connection between Nehemiah’s life and our lives?



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## **2. WHEN HAVE YOU RECEIVED BAD NEWS, LIVED IN YOUR OWN WORLD OF “EXILE,” AND HAD THINGS AROUND YOU BROKEN DOWN AND DESTROYED BY THE FIRES OF BAD CHOICES YOU’VE MADE, OR OTHERS HAVE MADE?**

We have all experienced in our own limited way, the path of Nehemiah. But when we see the depth of what Nehemiah faced AND HOW HE RESPONDED, we can learn a path forward from our own brokenness to rebuilding.

Notice what Nehemiah asked his brother. What was the latest news about “the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and about Jerusalem” (v. 2). The Jews who escaped and survived the exile were those who “escaped the deportation,” those who were allowed to remain in Jerusalem. When the Babylonians deported the Jews back in 587/586 BC, they took the leaders, those who had skills, and the youth. So, the deportation primarily included those who could work as slaves and those who could be re-educated into Babylonian culture. And those who were left—who escaped the exile? The elderly and, basically, the “unemployable,” those who wouldn’t be able to contribute to the Babylonian Empire and would only be a drain.

So, is it any wonder, then, that Nehemiah’s brother’s response indicated that those who remained in Jerusalem were in great trouble and shame, and the Jerusalem wall was broken down and the gates were destroyed by fire? There was no leadership. No skilled laborers. No one to rebuild the broken walls of their lives.

## **3. HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED A TIME IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU FELT LIKE YOU WERE UNREPAIRABLE? MAYBE YOUR MARRIAGE IS SO BROKEN DOWN THAT IT FEELS UNREPAIRABLE. YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR ESTRANGED MOTHER OR FATHER OR SON OR DAUGHTER IS SO FAR GONE THAT THERE’S NO WAY IT CAN BE REBUILT. OR YOUR FAITH HAS BEEN SO DECONSTRUCTED THAT IT JUST SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE THAT IT COULD EVER BE RECONSTRUCTED.**



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Let's take a look at what Nehemiah did when he was faced with what seemed to be a hopeless situation, and maybe we can learn some steps we can take when we face our own brokenness.

Look at Neh. 1:4: "As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days." (**Nehemiah 1:4a, ESV**)

**It's okay to grieve**, to lament, to take time to process with complete honesty the state of your faith, your marriage, or whatever may be broken, or where you feel "great trouble and shame" (v. 3). Many of the Psalms are laments—a crying out to God with tears, anger, grief. The Bible is so committed to the value of our expression of sorrow that there's even an entire book called, "Lamentations."

This first step can be hard for some of us, because we just want to get on with it. But it can be hard for others, because they don't want to or don't feel like they can get on with it. That's what leads to this second part of what we see in Nehemiah 1:4: "...and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven." (**Nehemiah 1:4b, ESV**)

## 4. WHAT ARE YOU GRIEVING?

**Turn your grief into prayer.** In other words, begin to shift from inward reflection to upward reconnection. Don't wallow in reflection. Redirect for reconnection with the God who brings healing and rebuilding. "I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven." If we keep "naval gazing," we're never going to move into a season of rebuilding. Don't rush through your grief, but don't get stuck there either.

Turning our attention heavenward takes commitment, dedication, and trust that God is our source of healing. He provides the strength for us to move forward in life.

The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. (Exodus 15:2, ESV)

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10, ESV)



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### 5. ARE YOU READY TO TURN YOUR ATTENTION HEAVWARD? TAKE A MOMENT NOW TO ASK GOD TO HELP YOU TURN YOUR GRIEF TOWARD TRUSTING IN HIM.

Turn your prayers into action. In the first part of Nehemiah 2, King Artaxerxes sees that something is troubling Nehemiah, and so the king asks, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.” (Nehemiah 2:2, ESV). Nehemiah pours out his heart with great fear and trepidation, and then the king said, “What are you requesting?” (Nehemiah 2:4a, ESV)

And here comes Nehemiah’s moment of truth. “So, I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ graves, that I may rebuild it.” (Nehemiah 2:4b-5, ESV)

The last part of verse 8 says, “And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.” (Nehemiah 2:8b, ESV)

What did Nehemiah do? He turned his prayers into action. He didn’t wallow in his grief, and he didn’t use his prayers as an excuse for not stepping up and taking action. His prayers led him to act. Look again at what Nehemiah said at the end of verse 5: “...that I may rebuild it” (Nehemiah 2:5b, ESV). Why is that significant? Because Nehemiah didn’t get stuck in his prayers and say, “O, Lord, when wilt Thou come to our aid and rebuild the wall?” But then do nothing. Do you see what happened in the text? Nehemiah became the answer to his own prayer. God used Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall.

**Here’s the point:** Too often in our prayers, we put the onus back on God, “O, God, why don’t you do something? Why don’t you rebuild my life, my marriage, my career?” And sometimes, I believe, God may be responding with, “Okay. I’m with you. I’m empowering you. I’m strengthening you. I will never leave you nor forsake you. And I am providing a family around you to support you and help you. Now, get off your behind and let’s get to work.



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### **6. AFTER YOU HAD TIME TO GRIEVE AND TURNED TO GOD IN PRAYER, WHAT ACTION WILL YOU TAKE SO THAT GOD CAN USE YOU TO BE AN ANSWER TO PRAYERS?**

As a church body, let's go be the answer to prayer. Let's go be FOR317: our city, our community, our neighborhoods. We may not be going out as a church to rebuild walls, but we're going out to re-activate our faith, to reconnect with God and others as we go serve together. And maybe this will be a good next step for you to start rebuilding your faith.

Maybe you're in or have recently come through a time where you have experienced "great trouble and shame," and the walls of your life are broken down (Neh. 1:3). You know what? We want to grieve with you. But we also want to turn that grief into prayer. And we want to turn that prayer into action. And we're here as a church to help you take that next step.