



## Life Group Sermon Study Notes

### “Love for the City: Hope for the City”

Sr. Ps. James Lowe – October 18, 2020

#### Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What was your favorite road trip or vacation?
- What is one accomplishment people might not know about that makes you proud?
- What is one worship song or lyric that has really spoken to your heart?

#### Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at [www.bethelworld.org](http://www.bethelworld.org)

#### **Nehemiah 2:1-7**

*In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. <sup>2</sup> And the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. <sup>3</sup> I said to the king, “Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” <sup>4</sup> Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> 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.” <sup>6</sup> And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), “How long will you be gone, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.*

Life provides plenty of opportunities to be disappointed and heartbroken. It can be due to finances, family, sickness, the government, and the list goes on. We don't see how life can get better. It can be easy to embrace a mentality that says life for the better is over. Ps. James looks at a time when Nehemiah – a cupbearer to the Persian king– was saddened by the events of life. We learn how difficult moments can be the catalyst for better life perspectives.

Nehemiah was aware of the plight of his people – Jews who had returned from exile and desired to help bring about restoration to Jerusalem. He knew God had given him the desire, but –as we look at the beginning of chapter two– nothing was happening to start the rebuilding process. Nehemiah went before the king, and the king noticed Nehemiah's saddened countenance. Nehemiah was afraid, but he told the king his sadness is on account of Jerusalem being in ruin. This can be interpreted as a bold move or an inevitable move. A bold move

because King Aertexes is Nehemiah's boss, and he didn't know if being honest would impact his position as cupbearer. An inevitable move because Nehemiah was so impacted by the state of Jerusalem, he couldn't keep it from showing up on his countenance. Either way, Nehemiah took a step of faith. The king responded favorably! He asked Nehemiah, "What is your request?"

He could have been satisfied with his privilege, instead he advocated for those less fortunate than him. Throughout the period, he prayed to God for wisdom. Nehemiah had the favor of the king, who provided authorization to go through other cities to get to Jerusalem. He also gave resources to rebuild the wall.

From Nehemiah, we learn how to have a level of trust in God that leads to action. Nehemiah doesn't seem to be concerned with what the enemies of Jerusalem can do. His focus was on working towards the promises of God, which was restoration once his people had turned back to Him. When change seems unlikely and difficult, the things we are passionate about have the potential to lead us into despair and bitterness. Yet the uncomfortable moments can be moments of favor that lead to progress. May we be reminded of the example of Nehemiah when we find ourselves in difficult situations. His continuous prayers resulted in wisdom and favor. He faced many obstacles during his efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Yet, he operated from a conviction that "it's not over unless God says it's over!"

### **Discussion (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.**

- What stands out to you in how Nehemiah approached helping the Jews who were returning from exile?
- Describe an experience you had when you felt like God gave you the desire to help make a difficult situation better.
- What has been helpful for you in keeping a hopeful mindset in tough times?

### **Prayer (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as other requests you may have.**

- Thank God that he can bring restoration during trying times.
- Ask God for a heart to use our influence for the good of those around us.
- Ask God for patience and faith to believe in the promises of God.