

# MESSAGE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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This week Senior Pastor Marty Grubbs continued in our Fearless series and taught from the Old Testament text of Nehemiah. Relating this story to serenity, Marty recited the prayer that contradicts fear for so many:

God, grant me the serenity to...

ACCEPT the things I cannot change,

COURAGE to change the things I can, and

WISDOM to know the difference."

In the story of Nehemiah, the people needed to recognize what they could not change, what they could change, and had to have the wisdom to do it. That's our story, too.

## SCRIPTURES:

### NEHEMIAH 1, 2, 4N (THE MESSAGE)

**1** <sup>1-2</sup> *The memoirs of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah.*

*It was the month of Kislev in the twentieth year. At the time I was in the palace complex at Susa. Hanani, one of my brothers, had just arrived from Judah with some fellow Jews. I asked them about the conditions among the Jews there who had survived the exile, and about Jerusalem.*

<sup>3</sup> *They told me, "The exile survivors who are left there in the province are in bad shape. Conditions are appalling. The wall of Jerusalem is still rubble; the city gates are still cinders."*

<sup>4</sup> *When I heard this, I sat down and wept. I mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God-of-Heaven.*

<sup>5-6</sup> *I said, "God, God-of-Heaven, the great and awesome God, loyal to his covenant and faithful to those who love him and obey his commands: Look at me, listen to me. Pay attention to this prayer of your servant that I'm praying day and night in intercession for your servants, the People of Israel, confessing the sins of the People of Israel. And I'm including myself, I and my ancestors, among those who have sinned against you.*

<sup>7-9</sup> *"We've treated you like dirt: We haven't done what you told us, haven't followed your commands, and haven't respected the decisions you gave to Moses your servant. All the same, remember the warning you posted to your servant Moses: 'If you betray me, I'll scatter you to the four winds, but if you come back to me and do what I tell you, I'll gather up all these scattered peoples from wherever they ended up and put them back in the place I chose to mark with my Name.'*

<sup>10-11</sup> *"Well, there they are—your servants, your people whom you so powerfully and impressively redeemed. O Master, listen to me, listen to your servant's prayer—and yes, to all your servants who delight in honoring you—and make me successful today so that I get what I want from the king."*

*I was cupbearer to the king.*

**2** <sup>1-2</sup> *It was the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king. At the hour for serving wine I brought it in and gave it to the king. I had never been hangdog in his presence before, so he asked me, "Why the long face? You're not sick are you? Or are you depressed?"*

<sup>2-3</sup> *That made me all the more agitated. I said, "Long live the king! And why shouldn't I be depressed when the city, the city where all my family is buried, is in ruins and the city gates have been reduced to cinders?"*

<sup>4-5</sup> The king then asked me, "So what do you want?"

Praying under my breath to the God-of-Heaven, I said, "If it please the king, and if the king thinks well of me, send me to Judah, to the city where my family is buried, so that I can rebuild it."

<sup>6</sup> The king, with the queen sitting alongside him, said, "How long will your work take and when would you expect to return?"

I gave him a time, and the king gave his approval to send me.

<sup>7-8</sup> Then I said, "If it please the king, provide me with letters to the governors across the Euphrates that authorize my travel through to Judah; and also an order to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, to supply me with timber for the beams of The Temple fortress, the wall of the city, and the house where I'll be living."

<sup>8-9</sup> The generous hand of my God was with me in this and the king gave them to me. When I met the governors across The River (the Euphrates) I showed them the king's letters. The king even sent along a cavalry escort.

<sup>10</sup> When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very upset, angry that anyone would come to look after the interests of the People of Israel.

"Come—Let's Build the Wall of Jerusalem"

<sup>11-12</sup> And so I arrived in Jerusalem. After I had been there three days, I got up in the middle of the night, I and a few men who were with me. I hadn't told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal with us was the one I was riding.

<sup>13-16</sup> Under cover of night I went past the Valley Gate toward the Dragon's Fountain to the Dung Gate looking over the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken through and whose gates had been burned up. I then crossed to the Fountain Gate and headed for the King's Pool but there wasn't enough room for the donkey I was riding to get through. So I went up the valley in the dark continuing my inspection of the wall. I came back in through the Valley Gate. The local officials had no idea where I'd gone or what I was doing—I hadn't breathed a word to the Jews, priests, nobles, local officials, or anyone else who would be working on the job.

<sup>17-18</sup> Then I gave them my report: "Face it: we're in a bad way here. Jerusalem is a wreck; its gates are burned up. Come—let's build the wall of Jerusalem and not live with this disgrace any longer." I told them how God was supporting me and how the king was backing me up.

They said, "We're with you. Let's get started." They rolled up their sleeves, ready for the good work.

<sup>19</sup> When Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they laughed at us, mocking, "Ha! What do you think you're doing? Do you think you can cross the king?"

<sup>20</sup> I shot back, "The God-of-Heaven will make sure we succeed. We're his servants and we're going to work, rebuilding. You can stick to your own business. You get no say in this—Jerusalem's none of your business!"

**4** <sup>1-2</sup> When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall he exploded in anger, vilifying the Jews. In the company of his Samaritan cronies and military he let loose: "What are these miserable Jews doing? Do they think they can get everything back to normal overnight? Make building stones out of make-believe?"

<sup>3</sup> At his side, Tobiah the Ammonite jumped in and said, "That's right! What do they think they're building? Why, if a fox climbed that wall, it would fall to pieces under his weight."

<sup>4-5</sup> Nehemiah prayed, "Oh listen to us, dear God. We're so despised: Boomerang their ridicule on their heads; have their enemies cart them off as war trophies to a land of no return; don't forgive their iniquity, don't wipe away their sin—they've insulted the builders!"

<sup>6</sup> We kept at it, repairing and rebuilding the wall. The whole wall was soon joined together and halfway to its intended height because the people had a heart for the work.

<sup>7-9</sup> When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repairs of the walls of Jerusalem were going so well—that the breaks in the wall were being fixed—they were absolutely furious. They put their heads together and decided to fight against Jerusalem and create as much trouble as they could. We countered with prayer to our God and set a round-the-clock guard against them.

<sup>10</sup> But soon word was going around in Judah,

The builders are pooped,  
the rubbish piles up;  
We're in over our heads,  
we can't build this wall.

<sup>11-12</sup> And all this time our enemies were saying, "They won't know what hit them. Before they know it we'll be at their throats, killing them right and left. That will put a stop to the work!" The Jews who were their neighbors kept reporting, "They have us surrounded; they're going to attack!" If we heard it once, we heard it ten times.

<sup>13-14</sup> So I stationed armed guards at the most vulnerable places of the wall and assigned people by families with their swords, lances, and bows. After looking things over I stood up and spoke to the nobles, officials, and everyone else: "Don't be afraid of them. Put your minds on the Master, great and awesome, and then fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

<sup>15-18</sup> Our enemies learned that we knew all about their plan and that God had frustrated it. And we went back to the wall and went to work. From then on half of my young men worked while the other half stood guard with lances, shields, bows, and mail armor. Military officers served as backup for everyone in Judah who was at work rebuilding the wall. The common laborers held a tool in one hand and a spear in the other. Each of the builders had a sword strapped to his side as he worked. I kept the trumpeter at my side to sound the alert.

<sup>19-20</sup> Then I spoke to the nobles and officials and everyone else: "There's a lot of work going on and we are spread out all along the wall, separated from each other. When you hear the trumpet call, join us there; our God will fight for us."

<sup>21</sup> And so we kept working, from first light until the stars came out, half of us holding lances.

<sup>22</sup> I also instructed the people, "Each person and his helper is to stay inside Jerusalem—guards by night and workmen by day."

<sup>23</sup> We all slept in our clothes—I, my brothers, my workmen, and the guards backing me up. And each one kept his spear in his hand, even when getting water.

<sup>4</sup> When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven...

## **HEBREWS 13:6**

*The Lord is my helper, so I will not fear. What can mere people do to me?"*

## **JOHN 14:27**

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

## **NEHEMIAH 2:4-5**

*The king said to me, "What is it you want?"  
Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king*

## **JAMES 1:5**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out from Marty's message?
2. Read (skim) Nehemiah 1,2, and 4. Highlight the verses that describe what the people could not change:
  - The destruction of the walls.
  - The anger of the enemy.
3. What are things we cannot change in our lives?
4. What we can change:
  - Fight the storms of fear with God's peace.
  - Fight these storms of fear with prayer
  - Fight the storms of fear with a plan (prepare)

How have you found this to be true?
5. Read Hebrews 13:6, John 14:27, Nehemiah 2:4-5. How do these verses speak to the things we can change?
6. Read James 1:5. Where does wisdom to know the difference between what we can and can't change?  
How have your prayers for wisdom been answered in the past? What situation or circumstance in your life do you need to pray for wisdom today?
7. How can we pray for you?

## PRAYER

Thank God for the serenity that comes from knowing he is part of your life—in the decisions, in the process, in the execution. Ask God for wisdom to move on from things you cannot change, and to work through those things you can.