

Wanted a Man **Nehemiah 1:1-4**

INTRO:

Do you want to be someone the LORD can and will use? If God were to place an ad in the help wanted section, what would it say?

WANTED a person to do a job for the King of Kings. Applicant must possess special qualifications. He need not be good looking, talented, charismatic, educated, or gifted. Rather he or she must possess a heart for GOD and a burden for God's work.

God is looking for men and women to serve Him. God is not looking for someone who is talented, charismatic, educated or gifted. He can supply this stuff. Rather, He wants men and women with a certain kind of heart.

Nehemiah was this kind of man. Sometimes, when we approach this book with its record of how God worked through the man Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, we get lost in admiring the leadership Nehemiah exhibited, and we forget the God who gave him that ability to lead. Today we want to explore why God used Nehemiah. It was because He was a man who possessed a heart for the LORD.

I. Nehemiah's Heart FOR the LORD (v. 1-4)

II. How We Can Have A Heart For God.

I. Nehemiah's Heart for the LORD (v. 1-3)

Nehemiah 1:1-4 *“The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, ‘The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’ So it was, when I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”*

A. Every text has a context. This is true not only grammatically, but also historically. Nehemiah lived at the end of the exile.

1. The first group of Hebrew pilgrims had gone back to the land of Palestine under the decree of Cyrus about 94 years before Nehemiah's time. Ezra, the scribe, a man you meet later in this book, led a second group of pilgrims back 14 years before **Nehemiah 1**.

2. After no little struggle, these first two groups of pilgrims were able to rebuild the Temple and to reestablish the worship of the True and Living God. However,

a job remained to be done. For this job, God sought out a man. The man's name was Nehemiah.

B. Nehemiah was a man with a heart for God. We know this first, because of the conversation in **verse 2-3**.

“Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, ‘The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’”

1. In the month of Chisleu (mid-November to mid-December) a kinsman of Nehemiah's came back from Jerusalem to Shushan. Hanani was in all probability Nehemiah's blood brother. When he came back, Nehemiah didn't ask him, *“How's the wife and kids?”* Nehemiah's concern was in a different direction. He wanted to know how God's people were faring and how the place of God's name was doing.

2. Now, I was a home missionary for almost twelve years. While we were missionaries, God gave us many folks who were prayer warriors for His work through us. I never had anyone who responded the way Nehemiah did to news from the fields. When he heard the people of God were enduring affliction and reproach and that the wall was broken down, Nehemiah sat down and wept. Why did he do that? Was it because he loved some of the people who were there? Maybe. Remember the nearest group historically had gone 14 years before. He wept because he knew and loved the God whom they represented. A person who has a heart for God also has a heart for the work which bears God's name

C. A second indication of Nehemiah's heart for the LORD is his willingness to leave his high and comfortable position in order to do the work God Gave Him to Do. Being cupbearer to the king was no small job. On the surface, it sounds like a menial position. Historical records indicate being cupbearer was much more. He had great access to the King, more than anyone else save the queen. He was a trusted official. In fact, the cupbearers quite often became like the prime minister of the kingdom. When we read through the second chapter of Nehemiah's record we can readily see what kind of sway this cupbearer had with the king.

1. Still, Nehemiah was willing to give this all up in order to do the will of God. He was willing to leave the best job, with the best benefits, and pay package to go work with some many times troublesome Jews to please God.

2. Why? Because, a long time before Nehemiah had fallen in love with God. He had lost all his self and self desire in his desire to see the One that he loved glorified.

D. We can see his heart for God in one more place. Nehemiah never once stood before the people and said, “*Look what I have done.*” When Nehemiah recorded the blessings in the work, we read phrases like in 4:6

“So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”

He also continually pointed out to the people and to the opposition Whose work they were doing.

Nehemiah 2:20 ***“So I answered them, and said to [Sanballat and Tobiah], ‘The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.’”***

Another example is

Nehemiah 4:14-15 ***“And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.’ And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work.”***

A person with a heart for the LORD will be sure that the glory goes the right place.

He gave credit to the folks through whom God worked. And glory to God for doing the work.

II. How We Can Have A Heart For God?

A. We can learn from Nehemiah’s example. First, at some point in life he was introduced to the LORD. Given his Jewish background, it no doubt happened in his home life. He learned faith from the faith he saw displayed in the lives of those with whom he lived.

B. Second, Nehemiah was immersed in the Word of God. We learn from his prayer in the rest of this chapter that **(1)** he knew God as He is revealed in the Bible. He obviously had read and assimilated the first five books of Moses. **(2)** He also showed a working knowledge of the history of Israel's rejection and captivity. **(3)** He prayed a promise in **1:8-9**, the LORD made through Moses in the book of **Deuteronomy**. If we want to have a heart for God, we must have a heart for His Word. We will never learn to love Him, if we do not spend time getting to know Him through the Bible.

C. Third, he knew the way to the throne of grace well. Nehemiah spent time fellowshiping with God in prayer. Nehemiah is the record of God working through a man. Nehemiah is also a book of prayer. All the time Nehemiah is praying for God's blessing upon the work of the people. Nehemiah also knew what it was to experience refuge in prayer. When the trouble came, Nehemiah told God about it and asked God to deal with the trouble makers. When discouragement came, he asked God to remember him for good for the investment he made in the work. Nehemiah also knew what it was to be a warehouseman and not the warehouse. He knew how to take his spiritual forklift and bring the need to God and leave it there. He had experience walking with God and seeing Him work in his life.

D. Will we say to our Lord today, ***“I want a heart like you gave Nehemiah for You?”*** We can have such a heart. A heart that is moved by that which moves Him. A heart which is responsive to the spiritual needs of others. A heart which wants nothing more than to bring glory to His name. The question is: Are we willing to let the Lord give us such a heart?

Hymn #378 *Only One Life to Offer*