

Being Positive in a Negative World A Positive Outlook

NEHEMIAH GETS A NEGATIVE REPORT

They said to me, “Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.”⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.⁵ Then I said, “O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands,⁶ listen 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!⁷ We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses...

“The people you rescued by your great power and strong hand are your servants.¹¹ O 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.”
In those days I was the king’s cup-bearer. **Nehemiah 1:3-7, 10-11 NLT**

- Nehemiah was broken over the condition of his city.
- Nehemiah met with God first in prayer.
- Nehemiah repented and took ownership of his part.
- Nehemiah saw the need clearly.
- Nehemiah had a vision of what could be.

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. **Nehemiah 2:1 NLT**

Nehemiah had been praying for some three to four months for God to provide an opportunity.

So 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... **Nehemiah 2:2 NLT**

Perceived disrespect could lead to execution.

³ but I replied, “Long live the king! How can I not be sad? ⁴ For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.” The king asked, “Well, how can I help you?” **Nehemiah 2:3-4 NLT**

With a prayer to the God of heaven,⁵ I 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.” **Nehemiah 2:5 NLT**

THE BIG AUDACIOUS ASK.

- Asked the king to release him from his job
- Asked the king to risk his own safety
- Asked the king to give him an entourage
- Asked the king to build him a personal home
- Asked the king to foot the bill

The 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. **Nehemiah 2:6 NLT**

THE KING AND THE QUEEN GAVE A POSITIVE RESPONSE!

- God answered Nehemiah’s prayer.
- The king and queen were in agreement.

⁷ I 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.⁸ And 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.” ...
Nehemiah 2:7-8 NLT

It is apparent that Nehemiah had spent much of the prior months not only praying, but also doing his research and putting together a plan for the mission.

And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me. **Nehemiah 2:8b NLT**

NEXT STEPS FOR ME TODAY...

- Ask God to break your heart over the condition of our nation.
- Repent and take ownership of your part.
- Ask God to clearly show you what you need to do.
- Pray and plan with God leading you.