So the rumors are true.

It's hard to believe it, but now there is no doubt-the city of my grandfather, and his father before him, and of all God's people—lies in ruins. I'd suspected as much, even heard pieces of reports from time to time, but not until today did it become real. Up until today I've held onto the old stories about the glory and the temple and the community. I've never been there, of course, but everyone tells stories. I guess I was holding onto hope that the reports weren't as bad as people were making them out to be, like maybe if Jerusalem wasn't destroyed that things could once again be as they were before all the sin and all the consequences. But I can no longer ignore the truth.

Yet what can I do? I'm no general. I'm no builder. I'm not really even a leader. I serve wine. And unless God intervenes, that's all I'll ever do. Nevertheless, I cannot shake this feeling—this prompting that is seeking to convince me of my personal stake in the future of a broken-down city and a broken-down people. But what can I do? For now, I can pray. And I can wait....

- Nehemiah
  445 B.C.

What Will You Get Out of this Study?
- We will learn how to REPURPOSE our lives
  - Repurpose: Finding an alternative use for something that already exists.
- God shows us ways to repurpose the world around us.
- And that's exactly what Nehemiah did...
- He repurposed broken down walls
- He repurposed a community that was far from God
- He repurposed a city that was living disconnected from each other and suffering as a result
- He repurposed political and social systems

- Nehemiah brought HOPE
- When I casually read Nehemiah I was impressed more with what he did… but through this study you and I both will find the most impressive things aren’t in what he did but it’s about his CHARACTER and COMMITMENT.

- **My prayer is that through this study…**
  1) Look at your own life:
     - in relation to Nehemiah’s life…
     - what drives you?
  2) Look outside:
     - how can God use you to repurpose the world around you?

- **Key Thought:**
  - Jesus is taking stuff some might consider throwing away and repurposing it for the glory of God. You can be a part of that! Let’s go dumpster-diving with Nehemiah. Let’s not give up on ourselves, God, or the church. Let’s be a part of God’s recycling plan.

### Who is Nehemiah?
- When he began writing his memoirs, Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king of Persia.
- He was willing to lay his life down for the king, and that relationship put Nehemiah in a position God intended to use.
- Was not a leader
- Was not well known
- Was not supernatural
- Was not super human
  - If you’re honest in small things, you’ll be honest in big things;
  - If you’re a crook in small things, you’ll be a crook in big things.
  - If you’re not honest in small jobs, who will put you in charge of the store?
- Nehemiah was set apart because of his character and his work ethic.
- Jim Collins, in his book, *Good to Great*, said the most effective leaders in our world exhibit a “paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will”
  - I love when the world catches up with the Bible... because this was shown throughout the book of Nehemiah.

**Nehemiah’s World**
- Lived in turbulent times to say the least.
- His family was part of 4,600 Jewish people exiled to Babylon as part of King Nebuchadnezzar’s march against Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
- It was in this assault that Jerusalem’s city walls were demolished, huge wooden city gates were burned, and the temple was destroyed.
- All but the poorest of the poor were relocated from Jerusalem (kinda like New Orleans post-Katrina)
- They remained in captivity until 538 B.C. when the Persians overtook Babylon, and Cyrus the Great released some 42,000 Jews and allowed them to return to Jerusalem.
- Those who returned found little success upon arrival... and attempts to reconstruct the temple didn’t last because of opposition.
- It wasn’t until Haggai and Zechariah appeared a few years later and encouraged people to get to work again that Jerusalem began to be restored.
- 60 more years passed, and more Israelites returned to Jerusalem under Ezra’s leadership to complete the rebuilding of the temple in 515 B.C.
- The walls and gates still laid in shambles...
- When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem in 445 B.C., rebuilding the walls was issue of national security and pride.
- City walls weren’t only problem... They were symbolic of the spiritual and physical condition of the people of God.
- During exile many people left the faith and picked up pagan cultures.
- Also physically... The walls were protection...
  - No security= no commerce= no food= severe famine.
- This was the Jerusalem that Nehemiah was called to rebuild- a city and a community of people in shambles.
- This is Nehemiah’s World. This is Our World.
I arrived today and saw the situation for myself. Hanani was right; it’s bad. The city is in horrible shape. It’s as if people have given up and are just waiting around for the next day to come. That’s the worst part—not the rubble and the falling down walls, but the state of the people. I look out at them and see people so desperately looking for someone to lead them that they don’t even realize they are looking. They are like sheep without a shepherd. And I am one of them. I’m not high and mighty, the grand savior from Persia sent to rescue their city and their lives. I’m just as insecure, just as needy, just as broken as the people sleeping in the streets. Is there a way for us to come together, not under my leadership, but under God’s? Is there a way for them to follow me as they walk with me? Is there a way for me to be both one of their own and their leader? I think there is. I pray there is—for all of our sakes. More later....

**Spiritual Leadership**

What’s the difference in leadership and spiritual leadership?

How do you define spiritual leadership?

I see three lessons all Christ-followers can apply to their lives if they want to be spiritual leaders...

1. Don’t speak FOR God until you speak WITH God.
2. Don’t speak FOR God until you HEAR from God.
3. Take responsibility for the spiritual growth of others.

Nehemiah prayed a very focused prayer focusing on three things...
1) The Awesome Nature of God (v. 5)
   - He recognized that God is a loving who keeps commitments to those who love and obey Him.
   - He prayed... and not just for a moment... a season of prayer... “number of days” v. 4
   - The prayer life of a leader matters more than we'll ever realize.

2) Asked God to Hear Him and to See His Commitment (v. 6)
   - Bold move!
   - I believe he understood God wants to meet the needs of His children
   - Jesus taught us this...
     - “Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What man among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them- this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:7-12)
   - Trusting the heart of God leads us to bold prayer even when the odds are stacked against us.

3) Turned His Prayer to Spiritual Condition of Israelites
   - He knew the root of Israel’s problems...
   - Others saw broken down walls and charred gates... He saw the city’s spiritual condition.
   - True problem wasn’t a broken down city filled with broken down people...
   - The true problem was a broken-down relationship with God.
   - Nehemiah confessed the truth and trusted God’s mercy for the rest.
How often do you pray for the spiritual needs of the people around you—your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family?

What keeps you from doing so more often?

- Before we move on, I want to make sure you catch this—Nehemiah showed us that a leader must bend a knee and wait on the Lord.

Waiting on the Lord is a powerful stance for a leader. Andrew Murray describes why:

> "In waiting on God, the first thought is of the God on whom we wait. We enter His presence and feel we need to be quiet so that He, as God, can overshadow us with Himself. God longs to reveal Himself and fill us with Himself. Waiting on God gives Him time in His own way and divine power to come to us."

Why do you think it’s so difficult to wait on God’s timing?

Is there a situation right now where you need to wait on the Lord?

Not only did Nehemiah find power in waiting on God, he also found wisdom as he turned to God. As Andrew Murray says, "Not till we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God’s holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours."