



DO SOMETHING GREAT.

WEEK 01 A GREAT BURDEN

READ: NEHEMIAH 1:1-3, PSALM 122

THINK

Throughout the Old Testament, the Jewish people, also called the Israelites, turned away from the Lord and marched after the desires of their sinful hearts. The Lord sent His prophets to warn them, but they despised, ignored, and even killed the prophets. Finally, the Lord allowed other nations to conquer the Israelites, culminating in many of them being carted off to Persia and Babylon to assimilate into those empires. Others who survived the siege were forced to work what used to be their land for their new masters. The book of Nehemiah is a companion to the book of Ezra, chronicling the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the city.

All of our lives are lived in the spaces between. Between what was and what's next, the now and the not yet. Nehemiah is no different. Over 400 years pass from the time David wrote Psalm 122 to the writing of Nehemiah. A Jewish exile living in Persia, Nehemiah remembers the former glory of Jerusalem, the city of the Lord. Hearing about its current state, Nehemiah's heart breaks over what has become of the once great city, his people, and their distance from their God.

We too may feel this dissonance in our lives. We look around at all of the despair and brokenness in the world, and our hearts ache for what was or the way it should be. In Romans 8, Paul talks about all of creation longing for Christ's return. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we have a steadfast hope in what's to come. Instead of retreating from all the hurt and chaos, may our hearts be burdened for those living without the hope of Jesus.

Afterall, it's not really about a wall but about listening to the Lord's leading and having the faith to act.

PRAY

Throughout this series, we will be praying through a different Psalm each week in three specific areas: Our City, Our Church, and My Role. This week, we will be using Psalm 122 to guide our prayer time. Feel free to pray the Psalm directly back to the Lord, modifying words or phrases as you feel led, or simply use the following prayer prompts, adding any specific requests the Lord has placed on your heart.

OUR CITY

Pray for peace and unity in our city. Pray for guidance and wisdom for our city leaders.

OUR CHURCH

Pray for peace and unity in our church. Pray for protection for our church leaders and their families. Pray for guidance and wisdom as they lead our church.

MY ROLE

Pray for the Lord to open your eyes to needs in our community and our church. May you bring them before the Lord in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to direct you if He would like you to act. If you have been feeling any discord or strife with another person in your life, pray for peace and reconciliation. Address any tendencies in your life which do not promote peace and unity with the Lord.

DISCUSS

When was the last time you heard really bad news? What was your response?

When was the last time you were moved to act on behalf of a need?

Do you usually feel burdened for or bothered by people and their needs?

Do you feel knowing Jesus gives you hope?

What do you feel is the spiritual condition of our city as a whole?

Does this motivate you to act on behalf of others? In what ways?

READ PSALM 122 AS A GROUP.

Did the Lord bring up anything during your prayer time this week you would like to share? Then, spend some time as a community praying for our city and our church along with any other specific prayer requests for your group.

GOING DEEPER

In the Jewish Bible, Nehemiah is joined with the book of Ezra, as they are both written by the same author. For additional context and to expand your study time this week, you may choose to read through Ezra 1:1-11. (We will plan to finish the entire book of Ezra as well throughout this series.)