

## Do you make others better?

Suggested Scripture Reading: Nehemiah 1:1-11

### Quoted verse:

*“Though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.” – Nehemiah 1:9b*

Many times we cried out for something, for someone or some experiences we encounter. We cry when we are sad, we cry when we thought that everything is out of control and sometimes we cry because we feel overwhelmed of different situations. We cry when we are sad and sometimes when we are overjoyed. A mother looking at her newly born baby, a guy who was just got hired for work, a young girl who received a simple gift and a problematic person who got a simple tap at the back and did a good job may just got into tears. Crying is a natural emotion for when we can't handle things anymore. But one man is different from these people, this man didn't cry for a candy, he didn't cry for money but cried about a broken wall.

Nehemiah was a high official in the Persian court of King Artaxerxes and was the king's cupbearer (Neh 1:11c). A cupbearer doesn't sound like a very great position of authority. But the cupbearer is someone the king trusted—he is the first one to taste the king's food and drink to ensure that it wasn't poisoned. He had access to the king like no one else, he heard every plan and every secret counsel that the king ever heard. Nehemiah was placed in a strategic place by the sovereignty of God for a very special reason.

When Nehemiah heard the report that “The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire” (Neh 1:3b) he “sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven” (Neh 1:4). Why did Nehemiah react like this? That's because this was the city of God, the place where God had placed His name; to Nehemiah and His people, it was a sacred site. That's why he fell down on his face and began to pray to God and asked Him to “hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses” (Neh 1:6-7). He was seeking God's forgiveness and confessing the sins of his people. He knew that this was a judgment from God.

Great rewards often take great risks, like when Nehemiah approached the king and ask for help. Being continually in prayer is vital to any success. Just because someone is in a position of power they can take advantage of others (like the nobles did). Perseverance against the enemy is essential. God can do some amazing things when we seek Him and to do it for His glory. Thinking of others is what also God has commanded us to do— to love our neighbors. Nehemiah thought of the people of Israel that's why he pleaded to God to give him the authority to build the wall. If it weren't for Nehemiah, Israel might have fallen anytime because of its rival cities and enemies surrounding it. God placed a heart of compassion in the heart of Nehemiah.

Like in our daily life, who are the least, lost and last people that we think of? Who are the people we bump into every day that needs our help? Like Nehemiah who cried for God so that He can use him to help his people, may we always have a hand and a heart to help and love the people around us.

### Prayer:

Lord, burden us and help us to see the people that are in need. Convict us to do give a helping hand for those who need care and love.

### Thought for the day:

The person God uses has a burden for His people, a vision for His purpose, and a commitment to His purpose.

### Guide Questions:

1. Are you in place where someone needs your help?

2. As Nehemiah, helped the people who are in need, what can you do for the people around you?
3. If you are in the position as with Nehemiah, do you want to do a hard task for the people you don't know?
4. How can you make others better in your church, school, work place or at home?

## Life Story

Requested Scripture Reading: John 1:43-51

### Quoted Verse:

*"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that."—John 1:48-50*

Everyone has a story, a story of where they have come from, what has shaped them, who is important to them, where they hope to go, what they hope to achieve. Our stories shape our lives, just as the larger story in which we find ourselves shapes us. Finding ourselves in God's story and in relationship to Jesus transforms our stories and infuses them with meaning. What story does your life tell?

We believe our relationships, with Jesus and others, deepen when we share our lives with one another. Too often, though, our small group "sharing" is limited to answering Bible study questions or offering prayer requests. We make space for snippets rather than stories.

But stories are important. We can experience healing as we share our story and listen to others' stories. Have you considered that over 70 percent of Scripture is narrative? That means the primary way God chose to reveal himself is through stories. God knows that stories engage us on all levels: intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical. He created us not just to have a story, but to be a revelation of the good story of the gospel. Every life is meant to uniquely reflect something of the character and kingdom of God that no other story can.

Author and counselor Dan Allender states, "If we come to know our story and then give it away, we will discover the deepest meaning of our lives. We will discover the Author who is embedded in our story, and we will know the glory he has designed for each one of us to reveal." The experiences of our lives affect how we relate to ourselves, others, and God. Our story shapes our relationships, spirituality, calling, and purpose. When we have questions like, "Why am I like this?" or "Why do I believe God is that way?" or "What am I supposed to be doing with my life?" discoveries and insights can be found when we explore our story and then share it with others.

Dan Allender, the author of *To Be Told: Know Your Story, Shape Your Future* says that our story was uniquely crafted to say "yes" to something of the kingdom of God, and "no" to something of the kingdom of darkness. Do you know what the "yes" and "no" of your life are? What is the heart and soul of your story? Where do the tears flow in your life? The laughter? What breaks your heart? What makes it sing? As you share the stories behind these questions, you will discover patterns and themes. What do they reveal about you, God, and your calling and purpose?

### Thought for the day:

God uses our story to tell His story through us.

### Prayer:

Lord, as you create many meaningful moments in our lives. May we share your goodness and love to other people. May they see You through our lives and through our stories. Amen.

### Guide Questions:

1. As the Author of my life, what has God revealed about *Himself* through this relationship or experience?
  - His attributes (Quality of Feature)
  - His character
  - His works
2. What has God revealed about *me*, the main character of my life, through this relationship or experience?

- My temperament
- My strengths
- My weaknesses
- My values

### Contributor of the Month



Lemuel C. Sanchez, 23 years old, is from Bayombong United Methodist Church in the North Nueva Vizcaya West Ifugao District of Northeast Philippines Annual Conference. He was a former Teen Advisory Board Member of Devozine in the year 2013-2014 and a former National UMYFP Officer who served as the Baguio Episcopal Vice-President in the year 2014-2016.

At present, he is serving as a mentor to the youth in his local church and also a worship leader. He is currently working as an Information Technology Instructor at Nueva Vizcaya State University. He believes that one day, the next leaders of our society or our nation will come from our schools

that is why he has a passion for leading and molding the youth so God can use them mightily in His ministries. He totally loves to eat a lot and sometimes his close friends call him "*tabachingching*". His goal for this year is to bring more people to God, influence others to be passionate in worshipping God, influence the youth of today through discipleship and lose weight.