

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A NEGATIVE SITUATION

Introduction

Have you ever been part of a team or a group when things weren't going as you thought they should be going?

Jon's cross country team was really struggling. When you examined closer, you found that not only were they getting slow times running, but everybody on the team was discouraged. The team wasn't getting along with one another, and people were thinking about quitting.

The Sr High worship team came together to rehearse, and there was tension in the air. Half of the group was complaining about the songs that were selected, and others were upset that they didn't get their own microphone and had to share. They were there to lead others to praise God but praising God was not in their hearts.

- I. How do you typically respond when you encounter negative situations?
 - A. Sometimes people quit. It's not worth it.
 - B. Other times, people get really frustrated & gossip to others but not the people who can actually do something about it.
 - C. Others continue to participate, but they have a bad attitude & are discouraged.

- II. How does God want us to respond?
 - A. The context
 1. Because of their rebellion against God, the nation of Israel was exiled into captivity, and the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians.
 2. There were some Israelites that, over time, made it back to Israel, but the country is in ruins, including the walls of Jerusalem.
 3. The account of Nehemiah is written during the times of the Persians who had conquered the Babylonians.
 - B. The news from Nehemiah's homeland (Nehemiah 1:3-4)
 1. He gets word that the walls of Jerusalem are broken down & in ruins.
 2. How does Nehemiah respond? (1:4) (He sits down & weeps)
 3. Why is this such a big deal to him?
 - a. It is a sign of national disgrace. Just imagine hearing that the White House was destroyed in a battle more than 70 years ago and hearing that it still hasn't been repaired but still is in ruins.
 - b. The walls provided safety & protection for a city, and with no walls, Jerusalem was totally vulnerable.
 - C. When you hear upsetting news, how do you respond?
 1. Nehemiah has a choice to make.
 2. He can either be frustrated or burdened.

3. What's the difference?
 - a. To be frustrated is to be mad and maybe even complain to others but to not really do anything about it.
 - b. To be burdened is to allow it to impact you deeply but motivated to do something.
- D. What does Nehemiah do with this burden? He fasted & prayed for days. (1:4)
- E. What did he pray? Read 1:5-11.
 1. He acknowledges the greatness of his God. (vs 5)
 2. He identifies himself with the Israelites & repents for their sin. (vs 6-7) (Not those people)
 3. He claims God's promise of future deliverance. (vs 8-10)
 4. He prays for success with a plan. (vs 11)
- F. What is going on here? Nehemiah hears this news, and instead of just being frustrated, he takes his burden to the One who can do something about it (God), and he commits himself to doing something about it with God's help.
- G. When you see a negative situation, how do you respond? How do you think God would want you to respond?
Nehemiah exercises faith in God.

III. Nehemiah's plan – he makes himself available for God to use him.

- A. The end of 1:11 says that Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king. What does that mean?
 1. It means he had a relationship with the king.
 2. He tasted all the king's food & wine before the king ate it, so the king couldn't be poisoned.
 3. It meant that Nehemiah was considered as expendable for the sake of the king. Would you have wanted that position?
 4. Since Nehemiah was like the last defense to the king's safety, it was important that the king trust him.
 5. That's why it was always important for the cupbearer to be happy in the king's presence lest the king think that the cupbearer was distressed in some way by the king and therefore, become disloyal.
- B. Notice how long Nehemiah waits before he approaches the king with this burden he has been carrying. According to 2:1, it has been 4 months. (He's been praying, fasting & planning all this time.) Read 2:1-3.
- C. Nehemiah allows himself to be sad in the king's presence. This is apparently the first time he did this because the king asks him about it. (1:2)
- D. Notice Nehemiah's response. (1:3)
 1. He was very afraid, and he says, "May the king live forever!"
 2. He wants the king to know he's not against him, but he also wants to use his position to advance God's kingdom.

3. Where has God placed you? Who are the people in your life? Maybe it's who you eat lunch with. Maybe it's the sports team you are on. Maybe it's who you sit beside in class.

4. God wants us to make ourselves available and seek Him and look for ways that we can advance God's kingdom.

E. Nehemiah asked God for a plan, and we are seeing Nehemiah execute the plan.

1. The king asks, "What's the matter?", and Nehemiah could have said, "Nothing".

2. But he acts with faith, and he tells the king about his burden – his hometown has its walls in ruins.

3. The king asked, "What is it you want?" (1:4)

4. Notice Nehemiah's next action. (1:4) He prays to God for success. And then he has specific things he asks the king for. Nehemiah has sought God about this and put a plan into place for 4 months.

5. 1:8 says God was gracious to Nehemiah, and the king granted his request.

Review:

Nehemiah saw a negative situation, and he:

1. Became burdened not just frustrated.
2. Took his burden to God.
3. Made himself available for God to use.
4. Devised a specific plan to make a difference for God's kingdom.

Application:

How about you?

1. How do you typically respond to negative situations? Frustration or burden?
2. If you are burdened, do you take it to God and trust Him with it?
3. Are you willing to make yourself available to God so He can use you to make a difference?
4. Do you make a plan and act?

God wants you to see Him in the midst of life's struggles, and He wants to use you to make a difference.

Will you trust Him and let Him work in you & through you?