

Nehemiah In Isolation

Welcome to **Week 4** of a “**Time for Action**”. Just as a reminder, we have introduced the Greek word **Kairos** which means, “*a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action: the opportune and decisive moment. A moment of indeterminate time in which events happen.*”

Our theme passage for this series is

Luke 12:54-56 (NIV) ⁵⁴ He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. ⁵⁵ And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. ⁵⁶ Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?”

Here Jesus tells the people that they can read the time of day and the weather from looking at the sky...but they cannot interpret what God is doing and who Jesus is.

For this series we have said that the “**kairos**” is “**God’s time.**” And here are the two important truths we need to remember as it relates to the “kairos” moments in our lives.

#1 - Kairos moments are always initiated by God.

#2 - Kairos moments always challenge us to think more highly of God, and less highly of ourselves.

Are we seeking after God’s will and what He wants to accomplish through us?

Over this series, we have been looking at key people in the Bible and their response to their kairos moments. Today we will look at Nehemiah. But before we do let’s first pray... and then discuss the context of what has happened and what’s going on. (PRAY)

Before Nehemiah, Israel had experienced God’s punishment and was exiled from the land by God (due to lots of sin and disobedience). God had sent in outside nations to punish Israel and they took some of the people of Israel away as prisoners. One could assume that God had forsaken His people and quit on them due to the situation, but the truth is that God wasn’t done with Israel and had not forsaken them. Look at the promise that God gives the survivors and exiles through the Prophet Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 29:10-14 (NIV)**: “**10 This is what the Lord says: “*When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you,*” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”**

God promised to restore Israel and bring back the exiles. And He does. God returns many exiles back to Israel. However, there are two problems that arise. The Jewish community faces external and internal issues. There is the pressure of outsiders, who are in the land and don't want to see the undefended Jewish nation restored. And there are the internal issues of the people not morally and religiously being faithful to the Lord. There was compromise going on amongst some of the Jewish community when it came to following the Lord faithfully. As a result, we see leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah step in to address these problems.

For the rest of today we will focus on Nehemiah and his Kairos moment. [We will see through Nehemiah's story and isolation alone with God, 4 truths about our kairos moments.](#)

Truth #1: Our Kairos moment begins in isolation alone with God

Oftentimes, we think our time for action occurs in one situation, but our kairos moments actually begin before things start to happen and aren't always just one isolated moment.

You might ask yourself, "What does that mean?" Well, what I mean is that sometimes [we need to be still and alone with God before we take action, and that very response is the true start to our kairos moment.](#) We can belittle or neglect our time alone with God, but it's with God where we should always begin. When we are at the end of ourselves and surrendered to God, is when we can truly walk in our kairos moment. [Anyone who hasn't learned to stand alone with God, can not be trusted to lead others for God.](#) Isolation with God is a necessary season of your calling, and if you are too afraid of being alone, then you will never hear and respond properly.

Look at Nehemiah. [Nehemiah 1:1-4 \(NIV\), "1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." 4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven."](#)

Why did Nehemiah cry? He cried because his people were in trouble and were disgraced. The wall and gates were destroyed. The people were vulnerable to attack. The worship of the Lord was being hindered. The Lord and His glory were being misrepresented. Nehemiah's heart broke for his God and his people. If our hearts don't break for the things that matter most, then we will not really strive to restore things. We gotta care. What matters most to you?

From verses 1 through 4, we see that Nehemiah isn't in Jerusalem, but rather is in another nation serving the king of Persia. Nehemiah's brother comes to him from Judah and informs him of the situation going on back home. And we see Nehemiah's response: he sits down, cries, mourns, fasts, and prays.

When you hear of your people (or any people) struggling, do you feel the gravity of the situation? Does it cause you to pause, cry, mourn, and seek God? Before we can truly act, we must acknowledge the situation, allow ourselves to feel, mourn, and surrender to God. **Your Kairos moment is never just about you, but also about the well being of others who are in need.**

Now let's look at what Nehemiah said to God in prayer. *Nehemiah 1:5-11 (NIV)*, "5 Then I said: "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. 8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 **but if** you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.' 10 "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

We see Nehemiah hit on a few things in his prayer:

1. He acknowledges the Lord and who He is (verse 5)
2. He makes a request for him and his people (verse 6)
3. He confesses the sin of himself and his people against God (verses 6-7)
4. He recalls scripture and what God has said (verses 8-9)
5. He remembers who God's people are and why (verse 10)
6. He requests God to listen, and to help him before the king of Persia (verse 11)

Nehemiah was honest, bold, and selfless in his prayer before the Lord. Remember, Nehemiah was in a cozy situation. He worked for the king of Persia. He was provided for and was not struggling in life, but he is about to risk it all for the sake of the Lord and his people. This situation isn't something to rush into, but rather requires silence and being alone with the Lord.

Also, this situation isn't something that happened before his kairos moment. This is the start of his kairos moment. We could say that **to neglect being alone with the Lord is in fact neglecting our kairos moment.** We can not recognize God's time without spending time with God. **If we can't be faithful in the little things, then why could we be trusted in the big things?** As we start walking in our kairos moment by being alone with God, then eventually it will lead to a time where we need to respond and act in public, which leads us to the 2nd truth about our Kairos moment:

Truth #2: Our Kairos moment demands action when the opportunity presents itself.

As we are going to see in Nehemiah chapter 2, the conversation with the king of Persia will happen in the month of Nisan. This means that from the moment that Nehemiah hears the news of Jerusalem... to the moment when he talks to the king of Persia about it, that about 4 months have passed by.

One thing we can initially take away from this, is that we shouldn't recklessly rush right into action, like we saw Peter do last week. Instead, we can spend time alone with the Lord and plan before addressing the situation at hand.

The second thing we can learn from this is that being alone with God isn't just a one day thing, but rather a lifestyle. I'm pretty sure that over the course of those 4 months that Nehemiah spent time alone with God in prayer, fasting, and planning. As a result, Nehemiah learned to listen to God and speak to the king (which would ultimately lead to him being able to lead others).

Nehemiah 2:1-3 (NIV), "In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, 2 so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much **afraid,** 3 but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

Nehemiah couldn't help from being sad about his people and city. It started to affect his job (as the king's cupbearer) to the point where the king noticed and asked what was wrong. This is the king of Persia, who on a simple order, could have Nehemiah killed. Yet Nehemiah took this opportunity to express to the king what was going on. Nehemiah didn't know how the king would respond, but Nehemiah used his work position for his people and his God. **Are you leveraging your job and position in order to help people and glorify God?**

Nehemiah was courageous, but don't forget that courage is an action done despite the fear we feel, so it's important to point out that he was very afraid. Nehemiah understood the gravity of the situation. He wasn't dumb. He could lose his life by leveraging his job this way, but as we see, his response is basically: **Why shouldn't I be sad when this horrible situation is happening?**

Why shouldn't we be upset that there are people who are lost? Why shouldn't we be upset that there are people struggling in life? Why shouldn't we be upset if our city is a hot mess falling apart?

Life is not about us and our comfort. Has your heart become hardened to sadness around you? Have you become numb to the mess around you? It is hard to recognize your kairos moment, when you are comfortable in your surroundings.

At the end of day, who do you care more about... God and people, or yourself?

When the opportunity arises to leverage your job, finances, resources, talents, position, etc for God's glory and the betterment of others, will you respond faithfully or selfishly?

Also, are you leveraging your life to serve God in missions and church planting? Are you leveraging your life to go on missionary journeys to spread the gospel and serve others? (expound on this)

Now let's look at the response of the king. **Nehemiah 2:4-6 (NIV)**, "4 The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, 5 and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it." 6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

The king asks what Nehemiah wants, and then Nehemiah prays to God before responding. **Even when it's time to act, we must remember to lean on God and ask for His help.**

Nehemiah could've chickened out or even asked for a small amount, but he takes advantage of this opportunity. Reminder, don't say NO for others when going about what God has called you to do

Nehemiah asks to go to Jerusalem to help fix the problems going on. The king agrees to send him with the caveat that he does want Nehemiah to come back (which shows that he values Nehemiah and his work as his cupbearer). But Nehemiah doesn't end his request there.

Nehemiah 2:7-9 (NIV), "7 I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? 8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And **because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.** 9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me."

Nehemiah had thought this through before this opportunity came up. He counted the cost to following God in this. He was ready because he had spent time alone with God. Even though he was ready, he had to still take action when the opportunity presented itself. **How about you? Will you do the same when it's time?**

Also, Nehemiah gives the credit to God in verse 8. Do you really give God the praise and credit He deserves? Nehemiah understood that this was a part of his kairos moment. It was something that God was making possible and responded faithfully. God even granted him so much favor with the king that he was given army officers and cavalry as protection. **God's hand was truly on Nehemiah, which is a reminder that His hand is truly on His people. If God is calling you to something, then He will have His hand on you and your kairos moment.**

And this leads us to our 3rd truth about our Kairos moments (which we've seen glimpses of so far) is: **Truth #3: Our Kairos moment is not a solo mission, but a group mission.**

So far, Nehemiah has taken advantage of his time alone with God and his opportunity to act has come. And now he is on his way to Jerusalem. But I want you to notice, he needed his brother to first inform him of Jerusalem's condition before he could mourn, fast, and pray to God about it. And he needed the king's approval and resources before he could move forward in action.

God doesn't call us to rogue missions, but to missions that will require community and help. Nehemiah will need help from the people in Jerusalem to further walk in this kairos moment.

Nehemiah 2:11-18 (NIV), *"11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days 12 I set out during the night with a few others. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. 13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. 14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; 15 so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. 16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work. 17 Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." 18 **I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding."** So they began this good work.*

So Nehemiah gets to Jerusalem and scouts out the city. He is still operating in isolation with God and is acting on this kairos opportunity. After he is done scouting, he speaks to the Jews, priests, nobles, officials, and any others who would be doing the work. He leads them with vision without just telling them to do something.

He first reminds them of the dire situation they are in. He then informs them of his plans to rebuild the wall and what God has been doing so far to make this possible. They respond with approval and start working. **Are you ready to do good work for the Lord and others?**

Nehemiah understood that this kairos moment was not on his shoulders alone, but that this would require God's help and the help of the Jewish community too. This is not a solo mission, but a group mission. However, before the Kairos moment could reach the community, Nehemiah needed to follow through with those first 2 truths: To begin in isolation and alone with God, and to act when the opportunity presents itself.

So let me ask, are you trying to do what God has called you to do alone? The truth is that He has called you and I to serve alongside each other. **Don't be disconnected from the church as you stand with God (whether people are with you or not).**

We need to be united in God's Kingdom work as the church. The church is not a building that we worship the Lord in. **The church is the community and family of God who are called to be on mission together to bring glory to God, spread the gospel, and help those in need.** We are not lone ranger Christians with isolated kairos moments, but rather we are a part of a unit (the church) with kairos moments that are all connected to the ultimate will and plan of the Lord. It's not about us and our comfort. It's about God and His will. **But as we are united together in the work of the Lord, what kind of people should we strive to be?**

Nehemiah 4:16-18 (NIV), "16 From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah 17 who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, 18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me."

We need to be people who are committed to rebuilding and defending what God has called us to do together. Are you prepared to be the kind of person who will commit in this way?

The end of Nehemiah 2:18 says that they began this good work that God had called them to. We don't just trust in the Lord and sit around waiting for Jesus to return. We are called to do good works as we follow Him. **Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), "10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."** God created you and I to do good works. These in reality are our kairos moments. Nehemiah saw the situation at hand, and faithfully responded to his kairos moment.

If we truly want to be people who faithfully respond to our kairos moments, then we must remember and apply James 2:17 to our lives. **James 2:17 (NIV) says, "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."** Faith without works is dead. True saving faith in the Lord is accompanied by action and good works.

In other words, talk is cheap. **If you truly trust in the Lord, then live like it.** Nehemiah had faith in God. And his faith was seen and made complete through his obedience in response to his kairos moments.

- He had faith in God, so he took time to isolate to be alone with God.
- He had faith in God, so he took action when the opportunity to act presented itself.
- He had faith in God, so he didn't treat his kairos moment as a solo mission, but rather he got others involved in the mission too.

If we truly want to respond to our kairos moment, then we must have genuine faith in God and act accordingly. For God has created us for good works and for these kairos moments. **But what happens when we complete the task that God has called us to do?**

This leads us to the fourth truth we see in Nehemiah's story.

Truth #4: We must continue to be faithful even when the work is done.

At this point, we will fast forward to Nehemiah 13. *Despite the amount of work and opposition they face... the walls are rebuilt, the people celebrate, the people confess their sin, reforms are made to commit to the Lord faithfully, and people are put in leadership positions.* Nehemiah then heads back to serve the king of Persia as he promised he would after the work was complete.

The work may be done, but life continues. It wasn't only about building walls, fixing gates, making reforms, etc. *It was about the glory of God, them setting their hearts on the Lord, and them being faithful to Him.*

Remember we are not lone ranger believers with isolated kairos moments, but rather we are a part of the Church with kairos moments that are all connected to the ultimate will and plan of the Lord.

In Nehemiah 13:6-7, we see sometime after returning to the king, that Nehemiah asked permission to go back to Jerusalem. The king grants his request. I'd encourage you to go read Nehemiah 13 on your own time, but to summarize... the people in Jerusalem again had compromised on their commitments to God and have committed sins that caused the original exile to happen in the first place. Nehemiah then proceeds to address all the issues he can and continues to go to the Lord in prayer.

Nehemiah 13:29-31 (NIV), "29 Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites. 30 So I purified the priests and the Levites of everything foreign, and assigned them duties, each to his own task. 31 I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me with favor, my God."

We must continue to seek and follow the Lord, even if He has granted us favor. We don't quit on being faithful when our kairos moment has been accomplished and completed *because it is all about the glory of God, us setting our hearts on the Lord, and us being faithful to Him.*

Invitation:

Which of the 4 truths about Kairos moments do you need to remember today?

Truth #1: Our Kairos moment begins in isolation alone with God

- Are you making time to be alone with God? (prayer, fasting, reading scripture)

Truth #2: Our Kairos moment demands action when the opportunity presents itself.

- Are you doing the good works that God has called you to?

Truth #3: Our Kairos moment is not a solo mission, but a group mission.

- Are you attempting to do what God has called you to do all on your own?

Truth #4: We must continue to be faithful even when the work is done.

- Are you striving to be faithful to God no matter what?