

WE CARE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

(Nehemiah 1:1-11)

Pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who by God's will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians. Not all Christians receive this blessing. Therefore let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart." We are called by God to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, but to regularly encourage and care for one another through weekly fellowship (Heb. 10:24-25). Reflecting on the life and ministry of Nehemiah, let's consider three heart attitudes of a believer who genuinely loves and cares for the people of God.

1. We should care enough _____ about the burdens of God's people.

Three words depict the burdens and brokenness of the Jewish people during Nehemiah's time: remnant, ruins and reproach (Neh. 1:3). When Nehemiah learned about all their distress, he wept, mourned, fasted and prayed for his fellow Jews (Neh. 1:4). To be deeply concerned for God's people is to be burdened by the afflictions of our fellow believers (Gal. 6:2; Rom. 12:15). What makes us grieve and cry reveals the love priorities of our heart. The crucial heart issue is this: Am I truly passionate for God's own love for His people that I am driven to tears and prayers and actually involve myself to care for my fellow believers?

2. We should care enough _____ for God's people.

A caring and concerned heart is a prayerful heart. Our prayer life is a reliable indicator of how much serious we are in caring for God's people. Nehemiah's prayer models for us how to pray and intercede for our fellow believers. Instead of blaming God, Nehemiah worshipped God and uttered a prayer of adoration (Neh. 1:5). Instead of complaining, he humbly offered a prayer of confession (Neh. 1:6-7). Instead of losing hope, he appealed to God's covenant promise through a prayer of remembrance (Neh. 1:8-10). What better comfort can we offer to God's people than entrusting them to the God of all Comfort through our prayers (Jas. 5:16).

3. We should care enough _____ God's people.

Nehemiah didn't just pray and then asked God to use somebody else to serve God's people. He made himself available for the task of rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem which represented the broken lives of God's people (Neh. 1:11). As members of one church family, we need to express Christlike love and care for our fellow believers by honoring our care group covenant which involves our commitment to spiritual growth, encouragement through God's Word, mutual love and care, prayer and intercession, honesty, trustworthiness, respect and mission (Rom. 15:3; Heb. 10:24-25; Col. 3:16; Gal. 6:2; Rom. 12:10; Eph. 6:18; Prov. 12:22; 11:13; Heb. 13:17; John 1:41-42).

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" – Romans 12:10

