

# The High Cost of Caring

by Warren Wiersbe

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of caring for others in a world of problems, using the example of Nehemiah in Nehemiah chapter 1 to illustrate the need to inquire, identify, intercede, and intervene to help others.*

**Duration:** 37:43

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 1:3-7, Nehemiah 1:9, Nehemiah 1:11

**Topics:** "Compassionate Living", "Selfless Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of caring and having a compassionate heart. He mentions that in today's world, it is easy to become immune to the problems and tragedies around us. The speaker uses the example of Nehemiah from the Bible as a forgotten hero who cared deeply. He challenges the listeners to examine their own hearts and see how much they truly care. The speaker concludes by stating that it is dangerous to live with the mindset of not caring, as it leads to a selfish and destructive life.

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## Transcript

Reading the book of Nehemiah chapter 1. Truly all is well as far as our relationship with God is concerned, but as far as conditions in this world, all is not well. And Nehemiah chapter 1 speaks to that need. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah, and it came to pass in the month Chisleu in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah.

And I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant who are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.

And it came to pass when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awe-inspiring God, who keepeth covenant and mercy for them who love him and observe his commandments. Let thine ear now be attentive and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel, thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee, both I and my Father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the

statutes, nor the ordinances, which thou commandest thy servant Moses.

Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples. But if ye turn unto me and keep my commandments and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of heaven, yet will I gather them from there, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power and by thy strong hand.

O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name. And prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

And God answered that prayer, and God used him in a wonderful way. How many times have you and I in our lives said, I don't care? Now perhaps we didn't really mean it, but we said it. I don't care.

Or perhaps you said it the way the young people say it today. Ask me if I care. You know, it's not easy these days to have the kind of a heart that cares.

To begin with, all of us have enough burdens and problems of our own, and why should we go around borrowing anybody else's problems? And I don't know if you've noticed it or not, but if you read the newspapers or listen to the news or watch the news on television, you are bombarded with tragedies and problems and difficulties. And if you aren't careful, after a while you get immune. Have you noticed that? People are wondering, why is there so much violence? Why can a person pull out a gun and shoot somebody? We've gotten accustomed to it.

People watch so much of this on the tube that we are now impervious. We are immune to really caring. Our emotions have been so jaded, so saturated.

We've had so much thrown at us that we've built up a resistance. And really if we aren't careful, we're going to find it very, very difficult to care. Now, that is dangerous.

Because when a person starts living on the philosophy, I don't care. Ask me if I care. He's starting to live an independent, selfish, destructive life because we have to care.

My friends, the most sensitive thing in your life is your heart. And the most sensitive thing about the human heart is the ability to feel pain and feel joy. The ability to be able to enter into, to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

And when we lose that sensitivity, we lose what it really means to be made in the image of God. And we become selfish, independent animals. This is why today we're looking at Nehemiah chapter 1. I'm greatly concerned about myself and about this flock that we not begin to get isolated and insulated from the needs around us.

I know you have problems. Everybody does. You have burdens.

Everybody does. Some people live with constant pain and handicap. There are some people who fight battles that are so difficult, they don't have any energy left for the rest of life.

I know this. But in the midst of all of this, let's maintain a heart that really cares. My Bible says, keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

And if my heart is what it ought to be, then life is what it ought to be. I suppose there are many people in the Bible we could point to as people who cared. But I want us to look at Nehemiah, one of the forgotten heroes of Jewish history.

And in Nehemiah chapter 1, we find a picture of a man who cared. And I'd like for us to examine our own hearts today, not somebody else's heart, our own hearts. Let's take our hearts and put them next to Nehemiah chapter 1, and let's examine our hearts to see how much we really care.

For if we really care, then we can enter into the kind of joy and blessing and victory and achievement that God wants us to have as Christians. It is not the Christian who is isolated that God uses. It's not the Christian who is insulated that God uses.

It's the Christian who is open to the pain and the hurt and the need of a world around him. In Nehemiah chapter 1, I want you to see four evidences of Nehemiah's concern, four evidences that he cared. They're so simple, nobody can miss them.

He cared enough to inquire, verses 1, 2, and 3. He cared enough to identify, verses 4 through 7. He cared enough to intercede, verses 8 through 10. And he cared enough to intervene and get involved, verse 11. Now there it is.

If I can look at my heart today and say, I care enough to inquire, I care enough to identify with, I care enough to intercede, I care enough to intervene and get involved, then I am keeping my heart with all diligence and God's going to do something. Let's take these evidences one by one and examine our own hearts. Verses 1, 2, and 3, he cared enough to inquire.

Now why in the world would Nehemiah inquire about a remnant of struggling, straggling Jews a thousand miles away? You see, Nehemiah was a big wheel. Nehemiah was an important man. He was the cup bearer to the king.

He was the number two man. He had the ear of the king. He had fellowship with the king.

It was his job to make sure that when the wine was poured, it wasn't poisoned. He had close intimacy with the king. He lived in a palace.

He was well-dressed. He was well-paid, certainly. He was a Jew and he was an alien, but what difference does it make? Nehemiah had it made.

Why in the world would Nehemiah be concerned about 50,000 Jews who had gone back to the Holy Land after the captivity, Jerusalem, the city, living there unprotected? Why should he be concerned? You see, he could have done what a lot of us do. He could have said, well, ignorance is bliss. Where ignorance is bliss is folly to be wise.

He could have done what many Christians do. I don't want to see. I don't want to hear.

I don't want to know. What I don't know won't hurt me. Don't you ever believe that.

What you don't know can hurt you. A man gets into his car in the city of Chicago, turns on the ignition, the car blows up. Somebody's put a bomb in the motor.

This has happened. What he didn't know hurt him. A fella gets an infection in his hand that starts to move up his arm.

He says, well, it'll go away, but it didn't go away. It killed him. What he didn't know hurt him.

He cared enough to inquire. He said, how are things going in Jerusalem? Some of his relatives had made that 45-day journey from the palace to Jerusalem, a long arc of a trip down there. They'd come back.

They'd been gone now for some three or four months. And they've come back, and Nehemiah is not concerned about his own welfare. He says, how is it going with our brethren in Jerusalem? And they say, it's not going so good.

And Nehemiah could have said what other people have said. Well, let them stew in their own grease. It's their own fault.

He didn't say that. He didn't say, well, it's too bad. They said, you know, all we have left is a remnant.

We used to have a great nation. The nation of Israel used to be the great nation. Other nations trembled when they thought of the nation of Israel.

Now all we have is a remnant, and that remnant is in reproach, and our city is in ruin. What kind of news is that? The remnant, the ruin, the reproach. And Nehemiah looked around, and things were good in the palace.

Everything was clean and polished. He was well fed, and he could have said, well, sorry I asked. But instead, he faced the facts honestly.

It's an interesting thing that many people today don't want to face facts. There are Christians today who aren't really concerned about the state of the church. As I travel from place to place in this country and other places, I often meet folks who used to be members of the Moody Church, and they'll say, how are things at the Moody Church? And they begin to name various people or various ministries, and I'm glad they're concerned.

There are those who say to you, how are you? And so you tell them, but they aren't listening. They didn't really mean, how are you? They were just saying, how are you? And if you do tell them, they won't listen. If they do listen, they won't remember.

If they do remember, they don't care. It's just a social pastime. Nehemiah wasn't like that.

Nehemiah was concerned enough to inquire. He didn't bury his head in the sand and say, well, it's all going to be all right by and by. I had an officer in a church, not this one, say to me, pastor, I don't care how many missionaries you ask us to support, just don't make us listen to them.

An officer in a fundamental church. Nehemiah wasn't like that. If Nehemiah were a member of a local church here today, he'd wait for the prayer letters to come through and read and say, how are things going in Oboe? How are things going over here in Japan? How are things going down here in Kentucky? He would inquire.

He'd be looking in the bulletin to find out where things are going and what things are doing. Every once in a while we publish in our Sunday bulletin missionary letters. I wonder how many people read them.

The great tragedy today is we don't care enough to inquire. Now, secondly, I noticed that he cared enough to identify. Came to pass when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed.

And people were saying, what's the matter with the King's assistant? He used to walk around the palace with a lightness in his step and he used to have such a joy on his face. And now he looks like he's sick. Has he eaten something that's upset him? No, no.

The King later on knew what it was when Nehemiah presented his cause to the King and said, I want a leave of absence. I'm going down to the Fatherland and I'm going to do something about the needs. The King looked at his face and said, oh, I know what this is.

This is sorrow of the heart. We don't see much of this today. Nehemiah cared enough to identify.

He identified with the suffering of the people. Right now, while we are enjoying the freedom of the city of Chicago, we have brothers and sisters in Christ who are in prison. Right now, while we have enough to eat and more to wear than we need, there are brothers and sisters in Christ in places in this world who are hungry and naked.

While you and I sometimes have to take pills because we've over eaten, there are brothers and sisters in Christ who are watching their children starve. And we take it all for granted. Nehemiah cared enough to identify.

He wept. When was the last time the news of the needs of God's people made any of us weep? And he mourned. And he stayed away from the palace parties.

And he wasn't fellowshiping in the joyful situations. He was mourning and weeping and fasting and praying. He cared enough to identify with their suffering.

Doesn't the Bible say to us, weep with those who weep. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Remember those who are in prison as though you are in prison with them.

He cared enough to identify, not only with their suffering, but he says here, confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against thee. Both I and my Father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee.

Now, Nehemiah wasn't there when all of this happened. He wasn't guilty of the awful sins that caused the fall of the people of Israel, the nation of Judah. When you read the book of Jeremiah, the prophet, you find out what happened to the people of Judah.

They were worshipping idols. They were not trusting God. And God had to come along and take them off into captivity.

And then God had to whip them in captivity. And God let a small remnant go back. Nehemiah wasn't to blame for any of this.

Some of us can recall during those dark days after John F. Kennedy was assassinated, that some of the people on radio and television were saying the whole nation was to blame. Remember that? All of us are to blame. It's our guilt that has done this.

Quite frankly, I used to pray for Mr. Kennedy, and I would not want to shoot him or see him shot. I did not feel as though it was my sin that had caused his death. In the overt sense, no.

In the plotting, the pulling of the trigger, no. But you know, all of us are a part of mankind. That's why John Donne said, never sin to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

We're all part of each other. And as Christians, we're all part of the church. And did you know that when one church has problems, it affects every church? And when one church has revival, it blesses every church? We belong to each other, and we affect each other, and we need each other, and we must be identified with each other.

We can't be like those two ladies who were taking their first airplane ride. I've told you about them. This is back in the days of the prop planes.

And they were seated there, and the one looked out the window and said, my, isn't it beautiful out there? And the other one looked over on the other side. The prop had stopped going around. Now, I have been over the Atlantic Ocean and seen a prop stop.

I know what this is like. And she nudged her neighbor and said, the motor has stopped. And her neighbor said, oh, don't worry about that.

It's on the other side of the plane. That's how dumb we get. Nehemiah wasn't that dumb.

Nehemiah cared enough to inquire, what is going on? Nehemiah cared enough to identify, I will suffer with them. How can I live in luxury? When my people are under reproach, he identified. Now, we don't like to do that.

We don't like to identify. We don't like to say, oh, God, it is my sin. Oh, God, it is my suffering.

Here are your people suffering. And oh, if we as Christians were all we ought to be, perhaps this wouldn't have happened. Oh, dear God, I want to identify.

Isn't that what Jesus did? All of the great people of the Bible identified. Moses chose rather to suffer reproach and affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He identified.

Jesus did. We wouldn't be Christians today. There wouldn't be salvation today.

There wouldn't be forgiveness today. There wouldn't be an open door to heaven today. There wouldn't be salvation from hell today were it not for the fact that Jesus came and identified.

He took upon himself our sins on his body on the cross. I noticed something else about Nehemiah, another evidence of his caring. He cared enough to intercede.

He cared enough to inquire, that's facts. He cared enough to identify, that's feeling. He cared enough to intercede, that's faith.

He said, I'm going to pray. I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'm going to pray. I sometimes hear people say, well, I can't do much, but I can pray.

It's the greatest thing you can do. Never say to a person, well, I can't do much, but I'll pray. You say to him, the greatest thing I can do for you is to pray.

I'm going to pray. I would rather have God's people praying for me than anything else I can think of. Nehemiah said, I'm going to pray.

Now, prayer is not a substitute for caring. It is for some of us. We hear about the death of missionaries.

We hear about drought and we hear about famine. We hear about financial needs. So I'll pray.

And after we pray, we forget about it. That was not so with Nehemiah. When you truly identify, intercession becomes much more than a substitute for action.

He said, I beseech the oh Lord God of heaven, the great and awe-inspiring God. He begins with the character of God. He moves into the covenant of God.

He says, you've made a covenant with your people and I want to come and confess our sins. We have sinned. We deserve everything that's happened to us, but oh God, can you help me do something about it? You see, the purpose of intercession, the purpose of intercession is not to get man's will done in heaven.

The purpose of intercession is to get God's will done on earth. And I want to warn you, when you start praying about something and God answers, he'll move you. Jesus said, the harvest is plenteous.

The laborers are few. Pray ye, the Lord of the harvest, that he'll send forth laborers into his harvest field. That's at the end of Matthew chapter 9. At the beginning of Matthew chapter 10, he calls his disciples and sends them out.

They were praying, oh God, send somebody into the harvest field. And God sent them. That's why many people don't want to pray.

When you really start praying about something, you say, oh God, here's a need in the moody church. Here's an area that needs help. Oh God, let's do something about it.

God says, fine, I'm going to send you. I'm sure when Moses was out taking care of his sheep, he was praying for the people in bondage in Egypt and crying out to God. God said, I've heard your prayer, Moses, I'm sending you.

And then Moses said, you've got the wrong man. Intercession. He cared enough to intercede.

Are you praying about the burdens and the needs of God's people? If someone were to stop you after the service is dismissed and say, what are you praying about? Would you have to think twice? Or is there on our hearts such a burden to get the will of God done that all our waking hours, we're praying, we're interceding, we're driving down the highway crying out to God. When we have that kind of praying, God really begins to work. He cared enough to inquire.

Are you so isolated and insulated from the realities of life that you don't know what's going on in the lives of other people? He cared enough to identify. Does the fact in the head move down to the feeling in the heart? He cared enough to intercede. And finally, he cared enough to intervene and get involved.

This is the hardest part. While he is praying, God is speaking to him. And finally, he comes and says, oh God, I am your servant.

That's a great way to pray. He didn't pray like most of us do. Oh Lord, help the people in Jerusalem.

Do something for them, them, them. And God says, wait a minute, when I work, I do it through people. I use people.

When I wanted to lead Israel out of Egypt, I got a hold of Moses. When I wanted to lead Israel into their promised land, I got a hold of Joshua. When I wanted to deliver Israel from their enemies, I got a hold of Gideon and Samson and David.

And now I want to do some building down in Jerusalem and I'm going to get a hold of another fellow. And Nehemiah, it's you. And Nehemiah said, I'm your servant.

He cared enough to intervene. Now, I could think up a half a dozen excuses that Nehemiah could have given because I've used them. And after I've used my half a dozen, each of you has got another half a dozen.

Nehemiah could have said, Lord, it wasn't my fault. Why should I go down there and clean up that mess? It was my father's who sinned. He didn't say that.

He said, I have sinned. Here's a good excuse. Use this if you want to sometime to get into trouble.

Lord, there's no need for me to pick up and pack up and go down to Jerusalem. I mean, that's a good 45 days trip. It's a thousand miles.

And I can be more of an influence for the Jews right here. You ever heard that one? I mean, here I am. I've got the ear of the king.

And I can lobby. And you know what, Lord? I've got money. I have a pretty good position.

I can pay somebody else to do it. Money is a great thing in the cause of Christ, provided it doesn't become a substitute for our hearts. But Nehemiah didn't say, it's not my fault.

Nehemiah didn't say, I can have more influence here. Nehemiah didn't say, let me give some money as a substitute for myself. Nehemiah didn't say something else.

Did you know that they tried to rebuild those walls years before? Years before they tried to rebuild those walls and it stopped. And Nehemiah could have said, well, Lord, we tried that once. It didn't work.

I've heard that in committee meetings all my life. Well, we tried that once. Didn't work.

He didn't say that. Nor did he say the thing I would have been tempted to say. Lord, I'm just one man.

I'm just one Jew. I'm a cup bearer. I'm not an architect.

I can't read blueprints. I don't know anything about hanging up bills. Gates.

I've been living in luxury here in this palace. God, you must have the wrong man. But Nehemiah didn't make excuses.

He got involved. A friend of mine has a little slogan on his calling card and on his stationery that says this. If not now, when? If not I, who? That's good.

We walk around saying somebody should do something about this. Somebody should do something about that. Well, who's the somebody? We are.

Nehemiah didn't organize a committee for the salvation of Jerusalem. He spent the next four months praying, fasting, making plans, thinking through, and then finally went to the king and said, I'm resigning. I want to leave of absence.

You do for what? I want to go to Jerusalem. Now, look at this, the folly of it from the security of the palace to the danger of Jerusalem, from the comfort of the palace to the discomfort of Jerusalem, from the prestige of being cup bearer to the king, stepping down to being the governor of a group of malcontents. But he did it.

He said, I can't wait any longer. God has called me. And you know, the rest of the story.

He went down there, surveyed the situation and in 52 days finished the job. They said it couldn't be done, but he did it. They ridiculed and they laughed at him.

They attacked him. They threatened his life, but he did it. Built the walls and hung the gates and made the city secure and then dedicated the people and the city to the glory of God.

Now, this whole chapter says to me that God blesses and uses people who care, not spectators, people who care. I know all of us can't go to the place. All of us can't do what Nehemiah did, but we can do something.

We can do something more than just simply watching. Abraham cared and delivered a lot from Sodom. Moses cared and delivered the nation from Egypt.

Paul cared and delivered thousands of souls from bondage. Jesus cared. He identified with us.

He prayed for us. He died for us. The big question is, do you and I care? Has our Christian life become a routine job? We fill out our check.

We put it in the envelope. We drop it in the basket. We say our prayers.

We read our Bible. But all the while, we really don't care. God says to me through Nehemiah, do you care? Do I care? Do I care enough to inquire? Do I really want to know what the needs are? Or am I happy and blissful in my ignorance? Do I care enough to identify? Can I feel with? Can I help to share the burden? Do I care enough to intercede? Do I care enough to get involved? It costs to care.

Once you start caring, you will pay a price. But oh, I tell you, it costs not to care. I would rather be with Nehemiah weeping and praying and going around those walls and encouraging, carrying out garbage and getting something done than to be back at the palace and saying, well, I pray for them occasionally.

God bless them. Yes, it costs to care, but it costs not to care. Because you lose that sensitivity of your heart.

Today, while you hear his voice, says the book of Hebrews, hard and not your heart. Do Christians get hard hearts? Yes, they do. How do you keep from getting a hard heart by caring? I'm sure this past week there were people whose wounds I did not help to heal because I didn't care.

I'm sure there are people whose story I didn't listen to because I didn't care. And I'm the loser. When your heart begins to calcify, when those sensitive feelings down inside become very self-centered and routine, when we start building walls around ourselves and protecting ourselves and securing ourselves and losing contact with that great, vast host of people who need us, then instead of getting big, we get small.

Instead of enrichment, there comes poverty. Instead of freedom, there comes bondage. And instead of enjoyment, there comes the bitterness of sorrow.

Yes, it costs to care, but it costs more not to care. Do you care? Will you put this care into practice this next week? Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus cared. Thank you that he came all the way from heaven to identify with us, that he cared enough to love us and die for us.

Thank you that there were Christians who cared enough to pray for us and witness to us and tell us how to be saved. We confessed, Lord, there were times we were angry with them, but now, Lord, we're thankful that they cared. Thank you there were Christians who cared enough to help us grow, who taught us the word of God and gave us opportunities for service.

Thank you there were those who cared enough to pray and to warn and sometimes to discipline. Thank you, Father, that there are those who care today. Thank you that you care.

You've said, casting all your cares upon him, for he cares for you. Lord, help us to care for others. Help us not, O God, to excuse ourselves, am I my brother's keeper? But rather, help us to identify where the need is to pray and to get involved.

I pray for any here without the Lord Jesus. O Father, that they might come to trust Christ, turn from their sins and believe in the Savior and be born again. I pray for selfish saints who need to be saved from themselves.

O do it today and help us, O God, to live as those who care and to put feet to our prayers. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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