

# Every Believer Is Important To God

Nehemiah 7:1-7

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**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:1-7** Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, {2} That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many. {3} And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house. {4} Now the city was large and great: but the people were few therein, and the houses were not built. {5} And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein, {6} These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city; {7} Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, I say, of the men of the people of Israel was this;

On our vacation my wife Sherry and I were doing what we liked to do best- hiking through the woods. There are several very nice nature trails up around Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee, and we really took advantage of them. Down one trail - I

suppose about a mile in - we saw something that I still can't explain. Maybe you can explain it to me. Down this grassy, desolate trail we came around a turn and ran into - a washing machine. Not an old time washing machine, like those with wringers on the side, but a fairly recently manufactured - perhaps 20 year old - washing machine. There was no sign of a house anywhere around there, and we were no where near a road or a place where someone could have done a drive by dumping. Why it was here was unexplainable, but here it was. A washing machine in the wilderness!

When I first looked at Nehemiah Chapter 7 it looked just like that washing machine in the wilderness. Verses 8 through 73 is a collection of nothing but *names and numbers*. Nehemiah was giving a genealogy of all those who were in Jerusalem, which he summarized as:

**CONTEXT** Nehemiah 7:66-67 **The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore, {67} Beside their menservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women.**

There were a total of **49,942 people** inside the walls of Jerusalem, if I added all these numbers up correctly. After reading the text I thought, “great, another washing machine in the wilderness”. Then the Spirit of God began to speak to my heart as He led me back to verse 5 of this chapter. We read:

**FOCAL** Nehemiah 7:5 **And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,**

**It was GOD Who directed Nehemiah to take this census.**

Why was this important? Because we who are humans often forget that it is *people who matter to God*. We get focused on things – on buildings, walls, and land. This is true of all of us. God, on the other hand, focuses on *people*. The Bible tells us that the Lord created the Heavens and the Earth for people, not for Himself.

We who are humans often forget that it is *people who matter to God*. We get focused on things – on buildings, walls, and land. This is true of all of us. God, on the other hand, focuses on *people*.

Think about it. The earth rotates around the sun in such a way as to give us – people – 24 hour days. The plant life of this planet absorbs human waste while emitting the oxygen we so desperately need to survive. God – Who could have created all things in a blink of an eye, made all of creation in six days and then rested on the seventh day. He did not rest because He was tired, but – as Jesus taught us – He rested as an example for us:

**Mark 2:27 ... The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:**

The **Sabbath was made for man**. God knew that we who were “**created in His image**” (**Genesis 1:26**) needed an example of when to rest. All of us, therefore, rest and worship the Lord at least one day each week. This is why God mandated a Sabbath. God made the animals for man, and its meat was given to us for food.

**1 Timothy 4:4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:**

He loves us, and wants the best for us. Though He had Nehemiah and the returning exiles rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem the Lord did not want them to worship the Wall, no

more than He wants His Church today to worship a Church building. King Solomon rightly said before building the first Temple Israel:

**2 Chronicles 6:18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!**

God cannot be contained in a walled city, in a Temple, in a Church building, or in a house. We who love the Lord respect the building where we worship the Lord, just as Nehemiah respected Jerusalem's rebuilt wall – but we are never to forget that the *reason* for building or wall is the people of God within. God loves humanity, He loves us so very much that He gave His only Begotten Son for our redemption (**John 3:16**). People matter to God. And people should matter to God's Church!

May God touch your hearts with His Word!

### **1. God Wants His People To Be In One Accord**

**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:1-2** Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, {2} That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.

Nehemiah chapter seven is a *pivotal* text, much like the elbow of your arm. In chapters 1-6 we saw how Nehemiah followed God's direction to *restore the wall*. In chapters 8-13 Nehemiah will – as God so guides – go about *restoring the people* of Jerusalem.

1. What is the primary reason for God's people to gather together? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the three major divisions of this Book?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Chapter 7 – Pivot  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

Before Nehemiah can begin the restoration of the people (chapter 8 and following) the people need to start worshipping the Lord. Worship cannot occur where there is confusion! The Bible tells us in:

**1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.**

Where confusion is, God is not! We see that vividly illustrated in the creation account of Genesis. Everything was initially confusion:

**Genesis 1:2-3 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. {3} And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.**

and God began correcting it, restoring order, and making this planet habitable for mankind which He so loves. How did Nehemiah – as God directed – bring order to the newly walled city of Jerusalem. We read:

**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:1** Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters<sup>1</sup>

3. Who are the *porters*? \_\_\_\_\_  
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The first thing Nehemiah did was have the **doors and the porters** set up. The doors control entry into the city, whereas the **porters or gatekeepers** control the doors. Nehemiah knew that there were many enemies about who wanted to stir up trouble in the city. We have already seen in the last chapter how:

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 6:1** Now it came to pass, when

1 שַׁעַר שְׁעָרַי, shō'êr shō'êr, (pronounced as *sho-are'*, *sho-are'*), a *janitor*:  
- doorkeeper, porter.

**Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had built the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)**

**Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem** and others stood against the work of God, and did everything they could do – even to the point of slander and liable – to stop the restoration of Jerusalem. These enemies were still watching Nehemiah, and still waiting for an opportunity to destroy God's man.

In addition to these enemies the cities of that day were often raided by wandering warlords or thieves. The doorkeepers were appointed to *specifically* watch the doors at all times. Enemies to God's people were kept out, while those with legitimate business were allowed into the city.

In the local Church the Lord established an office of men who exist to keep peace in this Body. In Acts chapter six we see that the first time internal trouble came into the local Church it came through the *fellowship hall*. The Church was – as Christ would have us – taking care of the widows and orphans. However the **Grecian believers** began to murmur or complain against the **Hebrew believers**, because the Grecians felt that **“their widows were neglected in the daily ministration”**. This could have resulted in disaster in the Church! When people feel neglected they have a tendency to get – well – a little ugly. The Apostles (who were at this time functioning as pastors) realized that this problem needed to be nipped in the bud. Better to avoid trouble than to have a riot. So they said:

**Acts 6:2-4 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. {3} Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. {4} But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

Thus began the office of the Deacon. These men are our gatekeepers, overseeing the *physical needs* of the local Church while the pastor oversees the *spiritual needs*. Trouble was averted in the early Church – as well as in Jerusalem – because of these faithful men of God.

Yet the entire burden of *warding off the enemy* is not just placed on the gatekeepers. We read:

**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:3 ... I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.**

4. Who assisted and worked alongside of the gatekeepers? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

5. Who were **Hanani** and **Hananiah**? What was their job in Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Two men were established as governors over Jerusalem, **Hanani**<sup>2</sup> and **Hananiah**<sup>3</sup>. The names of these two men are remarkably

similar. The *root* of both names is the Hebrew word which means **“grace”** or **“receiver of Grace”**. These were faithful men who loved the Lord. Though **Hanani** was *Nehemiah's blood brother* he was not selected to oversee Jerusalem because of nepotism. He was chosen because he, just like **Hananiah** were *godly, grace*

6. Why did Nehemiah choose **Hanani** and **Hananiah** to govern Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_

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2 חַנָּנִי, chānānīy, (pronounced *khan-aw-nee'*), *gracious*; *Chanani*, the name of six Israelites: - Hanani.

3 חַנַּנְיָהוּ, chānanyāh chānanyāhū, (pronounced *khan-an-yaw'*, *khan-an-yaw'-hoo*), *Jah has favored*; *Chananjah*, the name of thirteen Israelites: - Hananiah

oriented men. Nehemiah even says this in verse 3, where we read:

**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:2 ... I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.**

“He – Hananiah – was a faithful man who feared God ABOVE MANY”. He was a man who had received much of God's grace, and – since he was receptive to God – the Lord would use him in a greater capacity.

If we would be used of God, we must be surrendered – obedient – in all things. We cannot expect to be faithless in the small things and be expected to be entrusted with the larger things of God!

The Bible tells us:

**Psalms 75:6-7 For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. {7} But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.**

7. Where does *promotion* come from? \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

God **promotes** – sets up and puts down. God is sovereign, and in control. Hanani and Hananiah were believers who lived surrendered lives unto the Lord. Since they were faithful in the small things of God the Lord gave them greater things to do. God showed this to Israel – and to us – time and time again in the Scripture. When Israel was obedient to the Lord, worshiping only Him, obeying only Him, then Israel was blessed in all she tried to do. When Israel was disobedient, murmuring, hard hearted, and selfish, she experienced *bondage* to earthly Kingdoms.

It is much better to be obedient to God and His heavenly Kingdom!

Who else was suppose to guard the city from disruption? Who was to aid the **gatekeepers, Hanani and Hananiah**? We read:

**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:3 ... I said unto {Hanani and Hananiah}, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar them: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one to be over against his house.**

8. In addition to the gatekeepers, Hanani and Hananiah, who else was suppose to guard Jerusalem from enemy attacks? \_\_\_\_\_  
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The governors of the city were suppose to **appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem**. Every person in the city was responsible for protecting the city. Every citizen was to guard the wall – *especially that area closest to his house*.

When a city falls or a local Church self destructs it is not the fault of any one person. Each and every member of the Church is important, just as each and every member of Jerusalem was important. We are all equally accountable to *guard the wall*, maintaining unity and love within the Body.

I read with dismay an article in the October 29<sup>th</sup> Tennessee *Baptist and Reflector* entitled “**Kodak Church Sued For Purging Roll**”. The article stated that:

**“Five members of French Broad Valley Baptist Church here (in Kodak, Tennessee) filed a civil complaint against the pastor and deacons in Sevier County Circuit Court saying the defendants purged them from the membership rolls, along with more than 100 other members who did not want to retain the pastor, according to the *Mountain Press* of Sevier County. ... The plaintiffs say that the defendants violated Church bylaws by excluding all but one of them from participating in the vote to purge the rolls at a special called meeting ...”**

Regardless as to who is right or who is wrong this episode will be seen by those in the community – some of whom might have attended Church – in a poor light. Church fights often get more publicity than does the good things that local Churches do – even in our own Baptist newspapers.

It is important that *every member* realize that they are important, and that they all have an obligation of service before God. We who are His children by faith are not here for our own benefit, but we are here to represent Christ to a lost and dying world. It is for this reason that Jesus prayed:

**John 17:20-23** Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; {21} That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. {22} And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: {23} I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The world does not know of Christ other than through the witness that we as His local Church give. We are therefore called to – as much as is possible – to walk in one accord, loving God and loving one another.

9. Why is unity so important within God's local Church?

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**Just as there was one Voice – John the Baptist – who acted as Herald for Christ, the local Church is called to speak with one Voice heralding the Gospel of Christ.**

We stand or fall in our mission for Christ – TOGETHER. The Apostle told the Church at Rome:

**Romans 12:4-5** For as we have many members in one body,

**and all members have not the same office: {5} So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.**

We're all in this together. We succeed – together – or we fail – together. When the first generation of Israel failed to enter the Promised Land God didn't allow the faithful few to enter. They ALL wandered in the wilderness for forty long years until the first generation died off. Dear friends, I for one would rather succeed *together with you*. Or, as the Apostle told the Church of Ephesus:

**Ephesians 4:1-6** I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, {2} With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; {3} Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. {4} There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; {5} One Lord, one faith, one baptism, {6} One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

## **2. God Wants His People To Worship Him**

**FOCAL Nehemiah 7:1** Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed,

10. What is the significance of Nehemiah's setting up the singers and the Levites?

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Not only do people matter to God, but **worship matters to God**. When we as His people come together we do so to **worship Him**. When Abraham was commanded by God to *sacrifice his only son Isaac* that old Patriarch promptly gather the wood, the fire, and his son, and set out to do what God told him to do. When Abraham got to mount Moriah he told his servants:

**Genesis 22:5 ... Abide ye here .... I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.**

He didn't say "I'm here to kill Isaac", but "We're here to worship our God". First thing is always first. God made us, He loves us, He saved us, and He is worthy of worship. The Psalmist David commanded:

**Psalms 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

Nehemiah set apart the **singers and the Levites – the priests** – because singing and praising God go hand in hand. God loves His people to sing praises unto Him. Again the Psalmist wrote:

**Psalms 95:1-6 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. {2} Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. {3} For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. {4} In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. {5} The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. {6} O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

True worship **sings, praises, bows down and submits to God as God.** He is worthy!

God alone is to be worshiped! No person, place, or thing is ever to be worshiped in His stead.

**ILLUSTRATE** Willard S. Sperry<sup>4</sup> noted in his book *Reality in Worship* that there was a Danish Protestant church where the

members while passing down the aisle always turned and bowed towards a blank white space on the side wall. No one knew why they did this – it was just that way for many years, and a custom that was passed down from generation to generation. During a renovation of the Church building it was discovered that there was a pre-Restoration picture of the Virgin Mary underneath the whitewash of the wall. When people were Catholics they bowed to the Virgin Mary. When they converted to Christianity, moving away from this form of idolatry, those on the rolls of the Church who were sympathetic to Catholicism kept on bowing to this covered picture. Some three hundred years later they were worshipping *a blank space in the wall*.

God wants His people to worship Him and Him alone. We do not worship the saints, the virgin we call Mary, the Apostles, the Pastor, the building we meet in, nor the graves out on that hill just beyond our little chapel. We worship the Lord God Almighty! The Lord told Israel:

**Exodus 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:**

When we worship the Lord we are serving Him. Jesus told Satan:

**Matthew 4:10 ... Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

And the Apostle Paul tells us:

**Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

<sup>4</sup> Willard L. Sperry, *Reality in Worship*, p. 48, as quoted by Robert Orville Bitner, 'The Doctrine of Worship' (Unpublished Master's thesis, Dallas, Texas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954), p. 65. As found in the article at <http://www.bible.org>, *Worship, Part 2* by Bob Deffinbaugh, Th.M

Worship is an act of praising God, of focusing on God, and of glorifying God. In the days of Nehemiah the **singers and the Levites** were central to the worship of God. In the Church Age we who believe in Jesus are *all kings and priests unto God*. We are told:

**Revelation 1:5-6** And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. **Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, {6} And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

We who believe in God the Son have one High Priest – Jesus Christ the Righteous. The function of the local Church is to not only reach the world with the glorious Gospel of Christ but we are also to:

**1 Peter 2:9** But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye **should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:**

show forth God's praises. He is worthy of worship for He saved us from hell and keeps on saving us from our sins! Jesus Christ told the Samaritan woman:

**John 4:23-24** But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. {24} God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

11. Is worship *just* ritual? What part does ritual play in worship? \_\_\_\_\_  
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True worship of God is more than just nodding at a blank wall. True worship comes from the heart of the believer. It is an

expression of love and gratitude toward Him Who saved us.

**Bob Deffinbaugh , Th.M.**<sup>5</sup> writes:

**“Israel’s worship under the Law consisted of many ceremonies and rituals, but even then God was concerned with what went on in the spirit of those who worshiped. Over and over again the outward forms and motions of worship were condemned by the prophets (Isaiah 1:10-17; 29:13; Matthew 15:8-9; Mark 7:6-7). This is why an unbeliever can never worship God; his spirit has never been quickened. He is dead in his trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).”**

God wants people who love Him to worship Him. Worship is something that can only come from the heart of the saved.

**“Cain’s sacrifice was rejected by God because it was false worship (Genesis 4:5). Three thousand people died in one day because of the false worship of the golden calf fashioned by Aaron (Exodus 32). The kingdom of Israel was divided because of the idolatry and false worship of the nation (1 Kings 11:31-33). The fall of Jerusalem was directly attributable to the apostasy and false worship of the nation (Jeremiah 1:16; 16:11; 22:9). Misdirected worship was the cause of untold hardship and suffering in the Old Testament.”**<sup>6</sup>

When we as God's people come together we do so to worship Him. But we also worship the Lord our God every day whether in the “assembly of the righteous” or not. If you have been saved by faith in Christ the Lord wants your worship. You are to worship Him **“in spirit and in truth”**.

May God touch your hearts with His Word!

<sup>5</sup> At [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=439](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=439)

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

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