



## A Journey in Time

I remember the moment with vivid clarity, it was early January 2016, I was awkwardly crammed into the back of a vibrantly decorated Jeepney with a mission's team and several new Pilipino friends. One of our new friends was a local pastor with a propensity for telling jokes. While we were nervously weaving in and out of traffic, he shared this joke: "Who was the shortest man in the Bible?". Not knowing the answer, he regaled us with this witty response, "Nehemiah" but with a twist... (Knee-High-Miah).

I share this with you because every time I turn in my Bible to the book of Nehemiah this memory floods back into my mind. This past week I spent some time reading through Nehemiah's words and one of the themes I have been considering is that of "time". This remarkable story recounts Nehemiah's incredible leadership and reliance on God in completing the re-construction of the wall around Jerusalem in only 52 days. Yet, there is another important segment of time that precedes the building of the wall that was critical to its success.

Chapter 1:4 records these words, "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven." While it takes us less than two minutes to read these words and transition to the next events of Nehemiah's story we must stop and understand that "For some days" was a span of time that was approximately four months long. Today, living in a culture that thrives on instant gratification, high achievement and quick solutions four months might feel like a lifetime.

After receiving news about the trouble and disgrace of what was transpiring in Jerusalem three things occurred in the months following for Nehemiah. First, he mourned over the circumstances surrounding the lives of the people and the city that was their home. Second, he fasted and third, he prayed day and night before the God of heaven to help the people of Israel.

Something I need to ask myself and one thing I can ask of you is this: In the light of a difficult situation or experience do I/you take the appropriate amount of time to mourn, fast and pray for God's direction in moving forward? While some difficult experiences in life may not require a lengthy period of time to navigate, others will. Who we are will often influence the length of time each of us needs to work through life's challenges, the important part is how we start the journey.

The book of Nehemiah is filled with examples of his dependance on God through prayer to accomplish the tasks that God called him to. The meaning of the name Nehemiah is "Yahweh comforts". In times of mourning, in times of fasting, and in times of prayer, God is our comfort. He is our hope, and he is our guide in life. Paul, in Thessalonians 5:16-18 reminds us to "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ". My prayer is that no matter what life brings our way, easy or hard, positive or negative, that we are on the journey together with a God who loves us.