The world that we live in is filled with problems. Some are small and some are just overwhelming. I imagine that our elected leaders in Washington have been feeling very overwhelmed this week. But you know, they are not the only people facing problems that are overwhelming.

Every one of us has problems in our lives that are too big for us to solve alone. You may be feeling overwhelmed by the problems you are facing, but the good news is the God that we serve, the God of the Bible, wants to enable His children to be overcomers.

The truth is there is no problem that we face that God does not have a solution for and He can enable you to overcome any obstacle.

We are beginning a series of messages from the book of Nehemiah called “Being an Overcomer”. God wants to make you and me an overcomer!

Let’s begin by looking back at some of the events that shaped the time when Nehemiah lived. Israel became a great nation under King David’s 40 year rule. But after the rule of his son Solomon, the nation was
plunged into a **civil war between the north** which was **called Israel** and the **south called Judah**. In **722 B.C.**, the **Northern Kingdom** was conquered by Assyria. In **586 B.C.**, the **Southern kingdom** was **conquered by Nebuchadnezzar**, the ruler of **Babylonians**, and many of the **Jewish people** were carried into **captivity as slaves** 800 miles away in Babylon.

**Now all of this came on the nation of Israel because of their rebellion against God.** God had promised Israel that if they **obeyed Him**, He would **bless them** as a nation. If they did not, then He would **judge them** as a nation and cause them to be taken into **captivity** (Deuteronomy 28).

**This should serve as a reminder** that rebellion against God always brings **catastrophic results**.

**2Chronicles 36** gives us a **description** of this event.

*2Chronicles 36:17 “...God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. 18 He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. 19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; *they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. 20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant,**
who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons **until the kingdom of Persia came to power.**” NIV

**But God did not forget about His people.** He had a plan to redeem them from slavery in Babylon which was a part of His overall plan to redeem the world from its slavery to sin.

**God used the Persian Empire to conquer Babylon** and to set the Jews free to return to Israel so that the Messiah, Jesus, might be born in Bethlehem of Israel and fulfill all the prophecies.

**2Chronicles 36:22** “In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

*23 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you — may the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.'" NIV

**In 538 B.C., the first group returned to Judah under the leadership of Zerubbabel.**
In 458 B.C., a second group of Jews returned, led by Ezra.

That brings us to the year 444 B.C. and the beginning of a tremendous challenge in the life of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah had risen to a position of prominence as King Artaxerxes’ personal cupbearer. The position may sound to us like a very menial task without much significance. But it was a very important position in the king's court.

A powerful monarch like the king of Persia would select only the wisest and most discreet and trustworthy person for this position. Nehemiah had established a good relationship with King Artaxerxes and his position reveals much about his character.

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4

We are going to examine the character qualities that made Nehemiah an overcomer and in the process discover what can make you and me an overcomer.

T.S.

*1. An overcomer recognizes the problem.
Nehemiah was not too preoccupied or too busy to be concerned about people. He asked his brother Ha/na/ni about the plight of the Jewish people living in Jerusalem and the report was very bad. He did not assume that because everything was going good for him that everybody else was fine.

An overcomer doesn’t live in a dream world isolated from reality.

ILL. It is said that when the people of France were starving and someone told Queen Marie Antoinette that the peasants did not have any bread to eat she said, “Let them eat cake”. She was totally isolated from the people and had no clue of their needs.

Many times men are unaware of the needs of their family. We become preoccupied with work or other interests. Some men think that just bringing home a check will meet all the needs of their family.

One of the questions I encourage men to ask their families is, “What can I do to be a better husband and father?” When I told that to one group of men, one guy spoke up and said, “I can’t do that!” My wife would give me a list so long I would never be able to do it all.” I suggested they only ask for three things at a time.
It would be great if wives did the same thing.

Are you aware of the needs of your family, your friends, your neighbors, or coworkers? The first step to being an overcomer is being aware of the needs of others. The first step for our church to reach our community for Christ is becoming aware of the needs of the people.

*2. An overcomer has compassion.

Nehemiah wept over the plight of the people.

Our normal response to a problem is to get angry and to look for someone to blame. Who fouled up? Who blew it? Many times when we see people suffering we think it is their own fault. They’re just getting what they deserve.

Nehemiah could have thought the same thing. God had made it very clear that Israel was being punished for their sins. But Nehemiah had compassion on the plight of the people. He looked beyond their sin and saw their need. Isn’t that what God did for you and me?

It is that kind of compassion that will enable our church to overcome all the obstacles and reach our community for Christ.
Compassion for people enables you to hear the call of God to get involved.

*3. An overcomer goes to God first.

Read Nehemiah 1:5-11

Nehemiah went to God first with the problem.

*3. An overcomer goes to God first.

We can learn a lot about how we should pray by studying how he prayed.

*(1) **Praise** God for his goodness and greatness.

Nehemiah praised God for his goodness and greatness. Nehemiah 1:5 “...O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands.” NIV

**Praise is not for God’s benefit.** It’s solely for our benefit. It reminds us of who we are talking to and why we should trust Him with our problem.

*(2) **Confess** your sins.
Nehemiah confessed his own sins the sins of his people. Nehemiah 1:7 “We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed ...” NIV

Sometimes the first step in solving a problem is recognizing our part in creating it.

Even when we have had no part in creating the problem, it is still paramount that we deal with sin in our own life before tackling it. We do more harm than good when we seek to solve a problem while there is unconfessed sin in our heart. Sin blocks the power of God from our life. It keeps us from hearing the voice of God. Sin makes us a very difficult person to deal with.

If people find it difficult to deal with you, it is probably because you have sin in your life that you need to deal with. Before you can be an overcomer, you must deal with sin.

*(3) Claim the promises of God.

Nehemiah claimed the promises of God. Nehemiah 1:9 “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.” NIV
We must put our complete trust in God in order to overcome any problem.

*(4) Bring your request for help.

Nehemiah brought his request for help. Nehemiah 1:11 “Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man (the king)” NIV

I am sure that his prayer was much more extensive than this short passage. This is just a synopsis of his prayer because he prayed for days. I am sure he asked for wisdom for how to deal with every aspect of the project and sought guidance in all aspects.

God wants us to bring our request for help to Him so that when He grants them, we will realize where the help came from.

*(5) Persist in prayer.

Nehemiah was persistent in prayer. He prayed night and day for 4 months.

Nehemiah knew that others had tried to solve this problem for almost 100 years, so he went to God in prayer.
What is your first response when you face a problem?

Sometimes we think we can fix the problem without God’s help. **I can fix this!** Sometimes we think the problem is too big and there is **nothing we can do.** There’s no way I can fix this. **Neither response pleases God.**

This is what Jesus said in John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**” **NIV**

How many times do you think you and I need to be reminded of that, just one more time? 😊

*4. An overcomer gets **involved** personally.

**Nehemiah went beyond recognition** of the problem and even beyond just **talking to God** about the problem. **True prayer** always involves the **expression**, “Hear am I Lord, send me.” Many times our prayer is “Lord send someone else”.

**Nehemiah looked for how God** wanted him to be **involved personally**. He did not sit around and wait for someone else to do **what he could do.**
He prayed in Nehemiah 1:11 “Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.” NIV

Ill. Mark Fittz was a young man that saw the lostness of the people of Honduras and saw the terrible poverty they lived in. He had compassion and He asked God to show him what he could do and Hope Coffee was born. Hope Coffee buys coffee beans raised by small farmers and makes coffee to sell in the U S and uses the profits to provide clean water, adequate housing, and other basic needs to improve the lives of the people of Honduras. All of these services are provided through local churches that use these ministries to share Christ with the people. People’s lives are being changed! You can go to www.hopecoffee.org and see the results.

What great things might happen if all of us in this church prayed, “What can I do to meet the needs of the people in my community and share Christ with them?”

*God wants to develop in you and me the character of an overcomer!*