

RE:SOLUTION

The Better Question

Andy Stanley

Scripture: *Nehemiah 1*

Idea: If it's broken and it breaks your heart, be a part of fixing it.

I. This is the season of self-improvement.

- A. This is that time of year where we become painfully aware of where we are not, who we are not, and what we need to do differently.
- B. Traditionally, it is a season of self-absorption. And the result is that churches, health clubs, debt counselors, and vitamin shops do a booming business.
 - 1. What can **I** do to make **myself** a better person?
 - 2. Slimmer, stronger, smarter, debtless . . .
- C. There is nothing wrong with focusing on that all year long, if you are not a Jesus follower . . .

II. Nehemiah had his heart stirred and paid attention to the tension.

- A. I want to read a chapter from the book of **Nehemiah**.
 - 1. If you are not particularly religious or if you are Jewish, this is a perfect Sunday for you to be here.
 - 2. Nehemiah is an ancient document that contains an extraordinary historical account featuring a Jew named Nehemiah.
 - 3. This historical account was so important to the Jews that they protected it and eventually included it in the Jewish collection of sacred texts that we call the Old Testament, which was eventually combined with New Testament writings.
 - 4. There are no miracles—just good, old-fashioned hard work and leadership.
- B. This takes place during what is traditionally known as the **Jewish Exile**.
 - 1. The Babylonians invaded Judah (the Southern kingdom), conquered Jerusalem, and damaged the temple. No sacrifices could be made.
 - 2. About 70 years later, the Persians controlled that part of the world. **Cyrus the Great** encouraged the Jews to return to Jerusalem and reinstated their religion. Fifty thousand Jews left Babylon to do just that.
 - 3. There was pushback from non-Jewish locals who were threatened by a strong Jewish remnant. The Jews finally constructed a temple, but it