



**World Christian Fellowship**

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# NEHEMIAH

## PRAY, PREPARE, PROCEED: A Journey of Faith and Fellowship

Embarking on a journey of spiritual growth and fellowship can be as rewarding as it is transformative. This guide will help you navigate through meaningful experiences that are designed to enhance your connection with both your faith and fellowship. The schedule for Easter camp 2025 is crafted to ensure a balance of worship, learning, and fun. Let's dive into what each day has to offer you.

## Session 2

### Crying Out to God in the Midst of Adversity.



“If the God of providence is calling someone to a particular ministry, He will so overrule that person’s situation that he or she will be able to move into that ministry.”

~ J. I. Packer

**Nehemiah 1:4-11,**

#### **Overview**

Faced with the horrific news concerning Jerusalem and his countrymen, Nehemiah is overcome with grief. Through the tears, Nehemiah turns to the Lord. This opening prayer of this Old Testament book lays out one of the finest models of prayers in the entire Bible.

This cupbearer from Susa provides key principles in how to approach God—principles that are extremely applicable even for today!

Have you ever heard any of these phrases, or perhaps used them yourself:

“Prayer is boring!”

“I can’t pray out loud!”

“Why bother to pray?”

“I leave praying to those who need that kind of crutch!”

“I tried praying, but God didn’t answer my prayer!”

Let’s consider these before we look at Nehemiah’s experience of prayer.



***“Prayer is boring!”***

I wonder why any of us – especially Christians would say such a thing?

A Church cancelled the planned evening Service, and instead, held an 'emergency prayer time' for a family who needed the Church Family to hold them in prayer because of something they were going through.

The Church came together to call on the Name of the Lord for this Family, and more than twice the normal number for a Sunday evening came together, and what a time it was.

You certainly couldn't say it was boring, and people prayed from the heart.

Afterward, one person said that he had never been to a prayer meeting like it ever since he had been at the Church, several years ago.

It was suggested that we should have emergency prayer meetings more often!

What a shame prayer meetings aren't always like that.

***"I can't pray out loud!"***

I wonder why many Christians struggle with praying out loud.

One reason is that many of us were never taught how to pray out loud.

In Church life it is assumed that because you are a Christian you can pray out loud.

Wrong and poor assumption!

Someone once said that our public prayers are only a reflection of our personal prayer life.

Oh, I do hope that's not true, because often there are long silences in 'open prayer', and those praying out loud is usually a smaller percentage of those present, and those present are a very small percentage of the Church Family.

I went to Christian Endeavour when I was a boy, and teenager, and it was there that we were taught, and expected to pray out loud – at every meeting!

***“Why bother to pray?”***

I think this is partly to do with God not answering our prayers in the way we want!



For example, if we are holding an outdoor event we pray for fine weather, and if it's fine we say “God answered our prayer”, but if it rains we don't say a word!

**So, is there any point or purpose in praying?**

***“I leave praying to those who need that kind of crutch.”***

What a sad statement if it's true.

**Is Prayer only a crutch that helps keep us upright, in our walk with God?**

**Or at least for those who pray?**

***“I tried praying, but God didn't answer my prayer!”***

Maybe we need to ask why He didn't, or whether He answered it in a different way to what we expected.

Or maybe we prayed for the wrong things, or for the wrong motives.

## **The Prayer of Nehemiah.**

There are at least 11 occasions when Nehemiah prayed, throughout the Book of his name.

He is perhaps most well-known for what have come to be known as 'arrow prayers' (2:4b).

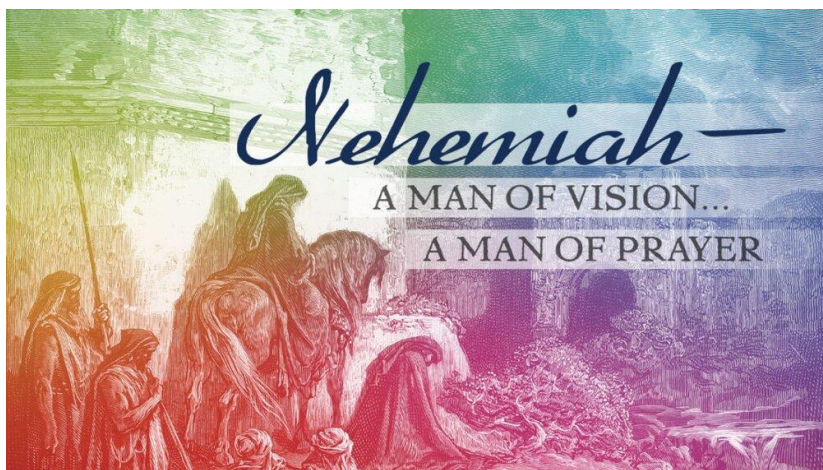
But these are not, and must never become a substitute, or the norm, for praying Christians (whether in a large group or on our own).

They eventually are a very poor diet, and 'arrow prayers' are good and useful when they arise from a life of prayer, such as we see demonstrated by Nehemiah.

Nehemiah acknowledges God's greatness.

**V 4-5**, *So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup>And I said: "I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love <sup>[c]</sup>You and observe Your commandments,*

Rather than looking to his own talents, abilities, and political contacts to resolve the problem back in Jerusalem, Nehemiah turns to the Lord. Instead of embracing his high position in the Persian courts, Nehemiah humbly bows in prayer.



Prayer which lasts approximately four months.

**Nehemiah 2:1**, *And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.*

Most scholars believe Nehemiah mourned because of the human needs back in Jerusalem.

The primary reason for Nehemiah's angst is due to the disarray of Jerusalem.

**Nehemiah 11:18**, *All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred and eighty-four.*

God had chosen this Holy City as "the dwelling place for His name".

**Nehemiah 1:9**, *but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'*

Nehemiah's prayer begins and ends with the word "please".

This interjection is an emphatic term for entreaty.

As observed in the notes of the NET Bible, "

This term is normally reserved for pleas for mercy from God in life-and-death situations.

**2 Kings 20:3**, *“Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.*

**Jonah 1:14**, *Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, “We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.”*

**Jonah 4:2**, *So he prayed to the Lord, and said, “Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.*

For forgiveness of heinous sins that would result or have resulted in severe judgment from God.

**Exodus 32:31**, *Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!*

**Daniel 9:4**, *And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, “O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments,*

Observe what Nehemiah states concerning the Lord in verse 5:

“Heaven” - This term speaks to the Lord’s transcendence.

He is not confined to the Temple in Jerusalem, but He also knows and sees all, even those living in Susa!

This declaration is echoed in the prayer Jesus taught to His disciples.

**Matthew 6:9-10**, *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*

Even in the midst of the tragic news, Nehemiah displays a proper perspective.

Nehemiah reflects on the character of God.

Not only for its encouraging aspect of staunchness and love, but first for the majesty which puts man, whether friend or foe, in his place.

Nehemiah appeals to God's forgiveness.

**V 6-7**, *please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. <sup>7</sup>We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.*

*"May your ear be attentive and your eyes be open to hear"*

**Is Nehemiah assuming that the Lord may not be aware of the situation?**



**If not, then why did Nehemiah include these words in his prayer?**

When Nehemiah reflects on the character of God and recognizes his own plight, he then confesses his own sin and the sins of Israel.

Afflictions often can assist one's memory including the recollection of sins that have been relegated to the recesses of one's mind.

Like Daniel.

**Daniel 9:4-6**, *And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, <sup>5</sup>we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. <sup>6</sup>Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.*

both men "did not rationalize away their involvement in Israel's corporate failure as a nation"

Interestingly, Nehemiah does not blame the Jewish people in Judea.

There are no discordant notes of blame, only the resonant notes of compassion.

## **Nehemiah rehearses God's promises.**

**V 8-10**, *Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; <sup>9</sup>but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' <sup>10</sup>Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.*

Nehemiah appeals to the same words Moses used in pleading for Israel on Mount Sinai.

**Deuteronomy 9:29**, *Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.'*

Nehemiah carefully recites Scripture in his prayer.

A common study of the Bible is essential for the nurture of the prayer life, and a consistent prayer life is essential for an understanding of the Bible.

In order for the Lord to answer Nehemiah's prayer, the Persian king, Artaxerxes, would need to overturn his previous decree.

The king had prohibited any further work to be done in the Holy City.

**Ezra 4:21**, *Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.*

This Persian cupbearer reminds the Lord of all that He has invested in His people.

Ultimately, the Lord's reputation is at stake. This point will be reiterated in verse 11 with the reference to the Lord's name.

### **Nehemiah petitions God's assistance.**

**V 11**, *O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to*

*fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” For I was the king’s cupbearer.*

The humility in which Nehemiah approaches the Lord can be seen once again in the use of the term “servant” in this verse.

Throughout this brief prayer, Nehemiah uses the words “servant” or “servants” eight times!

Not only does Nehemiah pray for his people and the situation back in Jerusalem, but he also expresses his willingness to serve the Lord in resolving this problem.

Nehemiah was not naive. He knew what lay ahead of him should he leave the king’s court and go to Jerusalem. Not only would he give up a choice position with security and safety, but his very life was at stake.

*“This man”*

Rather than see this title as a disdain for a pagan king, “this man” builds awareness and anticipation as the king’s identity is revealed.

**Nehemiah 2:1**, *And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.*



### *“Cup bearer”*

According to biblical expert in the Persian era, Nehemiah would have been a man of great influence as one with the closest access to the king, and one who could well determine who got to see the king. Above all, Nehemiah would have enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king.

## **Nehemiah's Prayer life:**

One of the things that strikes you about Nehemiah's prayer life, as one writer has pointed out is its breadth and scope. Listen to these different kinds of prayer:

**Adoration** (8:6; 9:3, 5)

**Thanksgiving** (12:24, 27, 31, 40, 46)

**Confession** (1:4 – 7; 9:33 – 34)

**Petition** (1:11; 2:4)

**Intercession** (1:6).

**How much do these headings reflect our own prayer lives?**

**Are our prayer lives simply a kind of shopping list:**

God bless so-and-so. God help Mr this. Please give Mrs that what she needs.

Not only was Nehemiah's prayer life well balanced, with these different kinds of prayer, but they also expressed.

**Anguish** (4:4 – 5; 6:14; 13:29)

**Joy** (12:43)

**For protection** (4:9)

**Prayers for dependence** (6:9)

**Commitment** (13:14, 22, 31).

His prayers are compassionate (1:4)

**Persistent** (1:4)

**Personal** (1:6)

**Corporate** (1:7).

Here, then is a believer in God who hurried to the place of prayer to share his **present griefs** (1:4)

Nehemiah confessed his **past failures** (1:6 – 7) and discovered his **future work** (1:11).

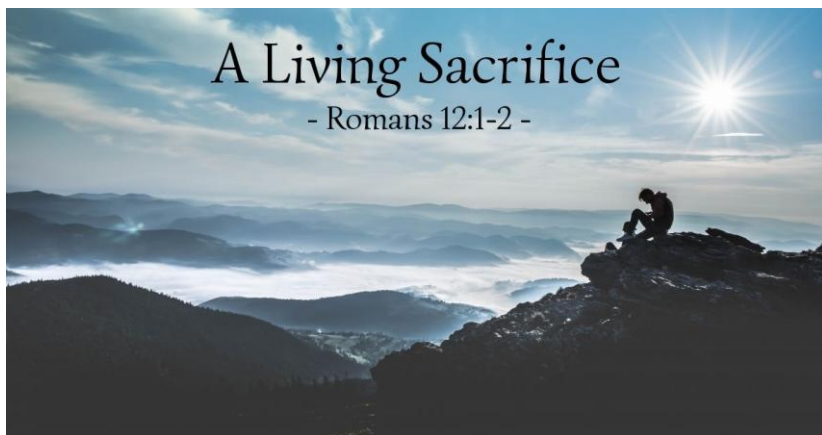
Wow!

What a prayer life!

## **Intersect**

To be used by the Lord, we must set aside sin, apathy, and sluggishness.

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





Let life and money go, welcome Christ. When God's glory weighs heaviest in the balance, and we willing to suffer the loss of all rather than God's name should suffer, we do, in a high degree, hallow God's name. **Thomas Watson.**

Even when we are walking in godliness and seeking to serve the Lord, He may have us wait.

**Isaiah 62:6-7**, *I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, <sup>7</sup>And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

We must remember that the Lord wishes for us to do His will more than we do!

**Jeremiah 29:10-14**, *For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. <sup>11</sup>For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup>Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. <sup>14</sup>I will be found by you, says the Lord, and*

*I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.*

### **What can We learn from Nehemiah's prayer?**

We can use scripture to aid our prayers.

We can come before God in humility in our prayers with our confession.

We can persevere in our prayer life praying for things again and again.



When we think about a year discernment, sitting and waiting can be uncomfortable particularly for people of action. But there is something in Nehemiah's pragmatic approach and his humility

that meant he realised he needed to begin with prayer and then came the action.

Where do we need to fast and pray for the needs of the world but also thinking about discernment for the year ahead both corporately and in our Individual lives.

Nehemiah's prayer teaches us things about this.

Nehemiah's Praying involved fasting and fasting can come in many shapes and sizes what it boils down to is fasting from things to give us more time to set aside for praying with God enables us to have a single focus on him and what we are bringing before Him.

Being part of a church means we have a mission from God to be his people in the areas that we are based.

Sharing God with our community.

**How will fasting and praying impact our mission?**

**When we stand in the gap seeking gods well asking him questions what then will he do what will the actions be?**

The amazing thing about prayer is that all of us can take a part in that in this year of discernment ahead. We can all play a part.

**How will we respond when we watch the news?**

**How will we respond when we see the needs in our community?**

**How will we respond when we see the needs within our church?**

**Will we stand in the gap?**

I Wonder what God might be stirring us to do as we take 2025 to discern his will.

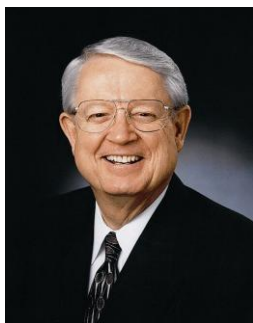
We can discern this together as we use Nehemiah's pattern of prayer, as we fast and pray, so that when we do come to a point of action, we know it is fuelled by God.

You may want to spend some additional time this week interacting with the following:

**Is there a task or situation in your life that you need to ask for God's guidance and help?**

Spend some time in prayer this week seeking the Lord's assistance.

Father, we are prone to worry and to complain about our problems. We struggle to solve things on our own, instead of depending on you. Forgive us, Father, for living as though we don't need you. Teach us to turn to you first, to face every challenge in your strength, and to give you praise for what you accomplish through us.



**Why should we pray? Prayer makes us wait, clears our vision, quiets our hearts, and activates our faith.**

**~ C. Swindoll**