

# NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER LIFE

E. M. Bounds, Power Through Prayer:

"We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to provide new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency. But men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods, God is looking for better men."

*Ezekiel 22:30 (Living Bible) "I (God) looked in vain for anyone who would build again the wall of righteousness that guards the land, who could stand in the gap but I found not one."*

- God is looking for people to use.
- He is looking for PEOPLE WHO CARE.
- Then he's looking for caring people who PRAY

The effectiveness of my life is determined by my prayer life.

## **Three questions:**

1. When should I pray?
2. Why should I pray?
3. How should I pray?

## **I. WHEN SHOULD I PRAY**

- Christ followers make prayer a first priority; worldly followers make prayer a last resort.

That's the difference between an effective life and a non effective life.

Nehemiah was a man of action.

- Nehemiah is an organizer, motivator, manager. He likes to do things. He built the wall around the city in 52 days.
- Yet, instead of immediately going out and doing something, when he heard that something was wrong the first thing he did was get alone with God.
- He got alone with God and prayed. This was the pattern of his life.
- There were nine different instances in his life. He was a man of prayer.

## II. WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

### 1. It shows I'm depending on God.

- The reason why we don't pray more is because we don't think we need to.
- We think we can handle it by ourselves.
- We think we can do it on our own.
- When you have a problem the human reaction, the natural reaction for us is to think, "Now what am I going to do about this?" instead of stopping and saying, "God, what do You want to do about this?"

*John 15 "Apart from Me you can do nothing."*

*Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven."*

- There is nothing God won't do for the person who is depending on Him.
- My usefulness as a christ follower, and your's, begins when I recognize my total dependence upon God.

The way I know I'm depending on God is that the first thing I do when a problem comes is I pray.

### 2. It lightens my load.

- The reason why Nehemiah prayed was because he was distressed by the bad news. He was a very sensitive person, very compassionate.
- But rather than simply mourning or moaning, he prayed.
- He took the problem to the Lord. He didn't just complain and gripe and wallow in self pity. He took his broken heart to the Lord.
- The name Nehemiah means "The Lord is my comfort".

God honors prayer that comes from a genuinely concerned heart. He longs to hear us say, "Lord, I can't handle this.

The fact is that we take our burdens to the Lord.

*Isaiah 40:31 "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."*

If you're going to be a effective, it produces stress.

Great followers find their strength on their knees.

### 3. It releases God's power.

*Jeremiah 33:3 "Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you know not."*

Prayer can do whatever God can do! Whatever God can do, prayer can do. Prayer taps in to the very resources of God.

### **III. HOW SHOULD I PRAY?**

We have a sample of a great man's praying in v. 5-11.

- Whenever people in the Bible ask God to do something they always presented a basis for it.
- They always said, "God I want you to do this because..." and they had a reason for Him to do it.
- There's many different reasons depending on the circumstance. Every time you find a prayer in the Bible, they gave a reason.
- A key question you want to ask yourself when you pray is this,
  - "Why should God answer my prayer?"
  - Why should I ask God to answer this prayer?
- The Bible teaches us that the right kind of praying is give God a reason to answer your prayer.

Don't just say "I want this" or "This is my desire" -- Give Him a reason why you're praying this.

With that as a background let me give you the four secrets to answered prayer from the life of Nehemiah.

#### **1. Base my request on God's character**

- This is the greatest reason to give to God. "I'm expecting You to answer this prayer because of Who You are.

*Verse 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 command."*

Nehemiah said three things about God:

1. You're great -- that's God's position.
  2. You're awesome -- that shows His power.
  3. You keep your promises -- God's covenant.
- The first thing Nehemiah did was he acknowledges who God is.

- That's what praise is. Acknowledge who God is and His greatness.
- Nehemiah is saying "God, I know our situation is in a mess, but I'm just reminding myself you're in control. I know that the problems over there in Jerusalem may be great but You are greater, You're bigger, You're bigger than this mess."
- He starts off by getting the right perspective.
- In starting to have answered prayer, say, "God, I want You to answer because of who You are.
  - You've given us all of these things, these promises.
  - You are a faithful God, a loving God, a merciful God" -- all these things the Bible tells us He is.

**You base your request on God's character.**

## **2. Confess the sin in my life.**

- This is step number two if you want to have answers to your prayers.
- The Jews had disobeyed God. As a result, God said, "All right, if you don't obey me you're going to lose the land of Israel." And they lost it.

Because they had not obeyed God they lost their city, Jerusalem, the Temple and were taken into foreign captivity -- all because they had disobeyed Him.

*v. 6b "Let your ear be attentive and your eyes be opened to the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands and the decrees and the laws you gave your servant Moses."*

- He says, "We've sinned." Look at how many times he uses the word "I" and "we". He says "I confess... myself... my father's house ... we have acted wickedly ... we have not obeyed."

**It wasn't Nehemiah's fault they went into captivity.**

Yet, he is including himself in the national sins. He says "I've been a part of the problem".

- There is personal confession and there is national confession.

**This is something we don't know anything about.**

- We are very individualistic. We're taught to confess my sins.
- When was the last time you confessed the sins of the nation? or the sins of your family? or your church? or your friends? We don't think that way.
- We're very individualistic. Our society has taught us the concept of you're only responsible for you.

**And that's just not true! You are your brother's keeper. We are all in this together.**

Nehemiah says "Not only do I have personal sin to confess but I have corporate sin. I'll accept the blame for other things.

**Another Law of the effective Life: Christ followers are willing accept the blame but non caring people - pass the buck.**

- If you want to be effective, you accept the blame and share the credit.
- Losers are always accusers and excusers. they're always making excuses why “
- *We have sinned against You.*”
- The point is that all sin is ultimately against God.

### **3. Claim the promises of God.**

*v. 8-9 Remember the instructions you gave to your servant Moses saying `If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the nations. But 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 they's chosen .. in my name.”*

Nehemiah is praying to the Lord and saying, "I want You to remember what You told your servant Moses."

Question: Does God have to be reminded?

No. Does He forget what He's promised? No.

- Then why do we do this? Because it helps us remember what God has promised.
- Nothing pleases God more that when you remind God of one of His promises.
- Do kids ever forget a promise? Never.
- So you have to be very careful about making them.

The Bible says we're imperfect fathers and if we imperfect fathers know that we need to fulfill our promises to our kids, how much more does a perfect Father, a Heavenly Father, intend to keep the promises He's made in His word.

**Prayer transforms God's promises into performance.**

- Prayer is taking God at His word.
- It's holding God to His promises.
- It's asking God to do what He's already promised He wants to do. Nehemiah says "God, first I'm basing my prayer on Who You are.
- Then I'm admitting who I am.

Then I'm reminding You of what You've said."

## There are over 7000 promises in the Bible waiting to be claimed.

- God never shuts His storehouse until you shut your mouth.

## God wants to bless you more than you want to be blessed.

- But you must claim the promises of God.
- Nehemiah could claim these promises because he knew them.
- The promises he mentions in these verses are Leviticus 26:33 and Deuteronomy 30:4.

When was the last time you memorized a promise out of Leviticus or Deuteronomy?

## The point is, the strength of my prayer life is determined by how well I know the promises of God.

- The secret of successful praying is pleading the promises of God. "God, you said it and because of what You said and who You are, I thank You that the answer is on its way. I'm expecting You to meet my needs."

We need to learn the promises of God.

## **4. Be very specific in what I ask for.**

In order to get specific answers to prayer you've got to make specific requests.

If you make general prayers, how will you know if they are answered?

*v. 10 "They are your servants, your people, whom you've redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this, your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."*

- Nehemiah has the whole prayer just to have the little request at the end. "When I go before the king to ask to be released to go build the wall, give me success when I make that request to the king."
- Nehemiah is willing to go to Jerusalem. He was available. He was willing to rebuild the project.
- But he knew he'd have to get the king's permission first who was definitely not a believer. You don't just let your right hand guy walk away.
- The king has the power of death and life over anybody.
- He's not hesitant to pray for success. He's very bold in his praying.

## Have you ever prayed, "Lord, make me successful!"

- If you haven't, why haven't you? What is the alternative? A failure?

- There is nothing wrong with praying for success if what you're doing is ultimately for the glory of God.
- Pray boldly.

Pray that God will make you successful in life for the glory of God. That's what Nehemiah did. This is a valid prayer. Give me success!

**Point: If I can't ask God to bless what I'm doing, then I'd better start doing something else.**

- If you can't ask God to make you a success at what you're doing, you should be doing something else. God doesn't want you to waste your life.

**Remember this is just a sample prayer of four months of praying.**

- What did Nehemiah do during these four months?
- Did he have this one prayer and he prayed it over several times a day? No, I doubt it.
- If Nehemiah was praying over a four month period his prayer probably evolved into this.
- Like our prayers do a lot of time.
- You start praying for something and then it gets clarified.

**That's one of the purposes God delays answering prayers many times; He wants us to clarify.**

I can imagine Nehemiah began with something like, "God, you've got to do something about those people over there. Please help them." He probably prayed that for a number of weeks.

- Finally, God probably said, "Nehemiah, aren't you being hypocritical? If you're so concerned, why don't you get involved?"
- Probably, sometime during that four month period a little light went on in Nehemiah's mind that said, "I could be the answer to that prayer. Maybe God could use me to go rebuild the wall. I'll do it! I'm available!"
- Over a period of time he probably got the concept. First he prayed, "God help them over there," then he said, "Maybe God could use me as an answer to that prayer."

Now he's finally praying, "Give me success."

**William Carey, "Expect great things from God; do great things for God."**

### **Four marks of Nehemiah's**

1. It's a prayer of conviction.
2. It's a prayer of confession

3. It's a prayer of confidence
4. It's a prayer of commitment.