

For the Family

Review the story from last week: The Jewish people, who had been taken away from their home land, were allowed to return, but things were difficult. They hadn't been able to rebuild the wall that would protect Jerusalem from their enemies. When Nehemiah heard about this he wept and mourned, fasted, and prayed. This week we will read together his prayer.

Read together Nehemiah 1:1-11

Talk together about the four aspects of Nehemiah's prayer:

1. Nehemiah praised God. He called God "the great and awesome God who keeps his promises and loves his people."

Ask, "What can we praise God for?" Think of what God is like, and what things God has done for us.

2. Nehemiah admitted his sin. He told God that he knew he had sinned, and that it was wrong.

Ask, "Are there some sins we need to admit to God?"

3. Nehemiah named a biblical promise. He asked God to remember his promise that if his people returned to him and kept his commandments that he would allow them to return home.

Ask, "Can you think of a promise that God has made?"

Examples:

1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins ...

Philippians 4:19 – And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

4. Nehemiah asked for help in serving God. He asked for God to give him success when he went before the king.

Ask, "Can you think of something we can do for God's kingdom, for which we can ask God to help us?"

Pray together, using the four steps: Praise God; Admit your sin; Name a promise; Ask for help for kingdom work.

Next Week: Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem (2:1-10) 4



Leading From the Knees

Nehemiah 1:1-11

Last Week: The book of Nehemiah tells the story of how God helped Nehemiah lead his people in rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem, as well as rebuilding the community.

Last week we reviewed the history of the exile from their homeland of God's people, and the three returns of Jews to Jerusalem by Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

We also previewed the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah started as a cupbearer to king Artaxerxes. He then led the difficult process of rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. Later he became the governor and together with Ezra led the people in a great reformation, as they returned to God's law.

We examined the beginning of the story. Nehemiah received a report that the people in Jerusalem were in trouble and shame. The wall around the city was unfinished, and the gates were burned. He responded with weeping and mourning, and spent many days fasting and praying.

This Week: When Nehemiah heard of the dire situation in Jerusalem, he responded with compassion, went to the Lord in prayer, and made himself available to be used by God to respond to this crisis. We will look at Nehemiah's 4-part prayer as a model for our prayers. We will get a glance into God's sovereignty, and how he wants to hear from his children. As you read and discuss, see what you can learn from Nehemiah's prayer.

Open

Choose one of the following:

1. Where is “home” for you? If it is another place, how long have you been away? Would you ever want to go back?
2. What unfinished projects at home most disturb you?

Review

Read Nehemiah 1:1-4

1. Why was Nehemiah so concerned about Jerusalem?
2. What was his response?
What does this say about his relationship with God?

Nehemiah’s Prayer

Read Nehemiah 1:5-11

Praise 5-6

Nehemiah makes three statements about God as he begins his prayer. Talk together about what each of them means:

1. “O LORD, God of heaven”
2. “the great and awesome God ...”
3. “... who keeps covenant and steadfast love ...”

He then asks God to hear his prayer. What posture does Nehemiah take in the invocation? (Hint: What does he call himself?) 6

Why do you think Nehemiah begins his prayer this way?

Confession 6-7

1. How does Nehemiah describe their sin?
2. How important is it that he included himself and his family in his confession?

Request to Remember 8-10

1. Nehemiah asks God to remember the promise he made at the time of Moses. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-4
What was the promise? How did God keep it?

2. What is Nehemiah’s appeal in verse 10?
Why do you think Nehemiah included this in his prayer?

Request for Success 11

What specifically was Nehemiah looking for?
How would he have defined “success”?

Reflect

Praise

Brainstorm as a group a list of praiseworthy attributes of God. Include who he is and what he has done.

Confess

Share together what sins the church needs to confess before God. (Not the sins of our culture; the sins of the church.)

Request to Remember

What promises of God would you like to see fulfilled?
What do you want God to “remember”?

Request for Success

Brainstorm together things we could do for the kingdom, for which we can ask God to give us success.
Think of achievements so big they would require God’s help.

Next Steps:

- I will seek to cultivate a heart of compassion and be tender toward the things of God.
- When confronted with life choices and decisions, I will approach God first, rather than seeking him as my last resort.
- I will pray this prayer:
“God, I am available and ready—use me.”

Memory Verse – Nehemiah 1:11

*O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant,
and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name,
and give success to your servant today,
and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”*