

For the Family

Review our story so far:

After hearing a report that Jerusalem was in ruins, Nehemiah spent many days praying and planning about what to do.

Read together Nehemiah 1:11–2:8

Explain that a cupbearer was an important position. One of the things he did was taste the king's wine to make sure it wasn't poisoned. This shows how much the king trusted Nehemiah.

Explain that people were never supposed to be sad in front of the king. When the king noticed Nehemiah's sadness, it made Nehemiah afraid. But when the king asked what was wrong, Nehemiah told him Jerusalem was in ruins, and the city gates were destroyed.

The king asked him what he wanted. This was the moment Nehemiah had been praying about for four months. He told the king that he wanted to go to Jerusalem and help rebuild the city. He asked for protection for the trip, and timber from the forest.

Nehemiah: *"And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me."* (verse 8)

Talk together about what Nehemiah did:

- He spent 4 months praying and planning.
- He overcame the danger of being sad in front of the king.
- He asked the king for help.
- He gave all the credit to God.

Talk together about times in our lives when we might need to spend time in prayer and planning. Sometimes we need help to overcome danger or risk in order to do the right thing. Sometimes we need to ask others for help, even people who don't know God. Whatever we do, we can give all the credit to God.

Pray together that you will spend more time praying and planning for what you can do for God's Kingdom. Pray that you will be ready to overcome the risks, to ask others for help, and to give all the glory to God.

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Praying and Planning

Nehemiah 2:1-8

Our Story So Far: 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 compassion, went to the Lord in prayer, and made himself available to be used by God to respond to this crisis.

He opened his prayer by praising God and then confessing his sin and the sins of God's people. He asked God to remember the covenant he had made with his children, and asked God to give him success when he approached the king.

This Week: Four months later, Nehemiah has an opportunity to speak with the king. Overcoming the danger and risk it poses, Nehemiah approaches the king with tact and diplomacy. As the king warms to his project, Nehemiah is emboldened to ask for everything he needs. In the end, he says that *"the good hand of my God was upon me."*

Open

1. Share with the group a time when you had an important meeting with someone where you were truly afraid. How did you prepare? How did it go?

Read Nehemiah 1:11–2:8

This is a *narrative* consisting almost entirely of a dialogue. Narratives have three components: Setting, Characters, and Plot.

Setting

What is the setting?

Does the setting change during the story?

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Characters

There are two main characters: Nehemiah and King Artaxerxes.
How would the setting affect Nehemiah? Artaxerxes?

What do you learn about Artaxerxes?

What do you learn about Nehemiah?

Plot

Where does the story begin?

How does it end?

What happens in between?

As the story goes forward, how does Nehemiah change or develop? How does Artaxerxes change or develop?

Observations

1. Why do you think Nehemiah waited four months to approach the king?
What do you think he was doing during that time? (Consider the whole story as you answer this question.)

2. What did Artaxerxes notice about Nehemiah? (2)
What did he determine that meant?

Why do you think Nehemiah was afraid of his observation?

Some interpreters believe that Nehemiah hid his true feelings from the king until this moment. Why do you think Nehemiah might have waited to show his sadness to the king?

Read Ezra 4:7-23.

What part might this have played in Nehemiah's caution?

3. How did Nehemiah answer the king's observation? (3)
What does this tell you about: Nehemiah's wisdom? His dependence on God? His respect for the king?

4. The king then asked Nehemiah, "What are you requesting?"

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What was Nehemiah's initial answer? (5)

What does this show about Nehemiah's wisdom and diplomacy?

5. Nehemiah then pressed on to ask for some additional items.
What were they?

What do these tell you about Nehemiah and his plan?

6. What was Nehemiah's conclusion about all this? (8)

Reflect

1. How do careful planning and dependence on God work together?
Does careful planning compliment or interfere with God's plan?

2. Do you have a dream about what God would have you do with your life?
Have you formulated a plan as you prayed about that dream?

3. Share a time when you had to wait on God's timing.
What did you do while you waited? How did things work out?

4. As a group, spend some time dreaming, praying, and planning about what God would have you do as a small group. What can you do as a group to build the kingdom of God in Treasure Valley?
How can God use you as part of Eagle Christian Church?

Close by reading Colossians 3:17 and praying together.

Next Steps:

- I will dream big, God-sized dreams.
- I will be ready and available to be used by God.
- I will pray and plan for the opportunity to accomplish God's purpose in my life, my family, my career, my finances, and my relationships.

Memory Verse – Nehemiah 2:8

*... And the king granted me what I asked,
for the good hand of God was upon me.*

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