

# LIFE GROUP LESSON

Prayer on the Run • Week of September 8

God's plan of redemption began through the faith of one man, Abraham, and his son, Isaac, and grandson, Jacob (whose name was changed to 'Israel'). Throughout the Old Testament, we see the nation of Israel, Jacob's descendants, repeatedly warned of coming judgment (Jeremiah 25:4-7). Will God's people turn from their sin? Prophet after prophet pleads with all who will listen – from kings, leaders, priests, down to the commoners. But the people continue in their rebellion resulting in the removal of God's favor. Israel is conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC and Judah by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

Yet, even when God's people finally face the consequences of their sin, the Lord does not forget Israel. After seventy years in captivity, the Jews are allowed to return to their homeland as foretold (2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4, Isaiah 44:28). And though the difficult task of rebuilding their identity is before them, we see how God never stops loving His people. Every promise is fulfilled (see Jeremiah 32:36-41). God graciously preserves a remnant who will rebuild His Temple, and eventually rebuild the walls and charred gates surrounding Jerusalem.

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11

Though Nehemiah serves as cupbearer to the king (Persian Emperor Artaxerxes, 464-423 BC) in the fortress of Susa, God has a greater assignment for Nehemiah. News of Jerusalem's walls in ruins stirs a passion in his heart to the level that he fell to his knees in fasting and prayer (v4).

1. Even today, God raises up courageous leadership to accomplish great things. But as we see with Nehemiah, living into God's purpose begins with prayer – fervent prayer, fasting and deep mourning. When has a burden for others so affected you (at a gut-level) that you 'mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven' for days?

2. Nehemiah's prayer in vv5-11 shows us key components of prayer. What are they?

a)

b)

c)

d)

Nehemiah also demonstrates a certain balance in a fervent prayer life – a time to "Be Still and Know that *God* is God" (Psalm 46:10) and a time to get moving and *Pray-on-the-Run*. For example, Nehemiah hears of the returned exiles' trouble and disgrace in 'late Autumn' (v1) but does not make his burden public until the 'following spring' (Nehemiah 2:1). Standing before the king, Nehemiah lifts 'a prayer to the God of heaven' – a prayer-on-the-run – and proceeds to make some very specific requests before Artaxerxes.

Read Nehemiah 2:1-10

For six months Nehemiah fasts and prays. Looking at his prayer in chapter one, vv5-11, we can somewhat imagine where his heart is during this interim of time, from the month of *Kislev* (late Autumn) to the month of *Nisan* (early spring). Nehemiah praises God. He trusts God's justice, mercy, and promises. He confesses his sins, the sins of his people, and the sins of his own family. Clearly, Nehemiah loves God and delights in honoring God.

3. Before we receive favor *from* God, we must first favor God by putting God first in every area of our lives. In his prayer, Nehemiah focuses on God's salvation and mercy. When you pray, is God (and God's ways) your primary focus? Or do you focus on yourself?

Nehemiah asks the Lord to hear the prayers of those who 'delight in honoring' God. How can you delight in honoring God? What would that look like? (today, in the coming week)



**Text: Nehemiah 1:1-11, 2:1-8**

**PLAIN TRUTH:**

\_\_\_\_\_ brings us to God,  
but it is \_\_\_\_\_ which sustains our  
prayer life.

**Here is how you pray:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ God!
2. \_\_\_\_\_ your sins.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ specifically to God.

**Power Point:** If you want God's \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_ God first.

4. Make an \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. We lack \_\_\_\_\_ with others because we lack \_\_\_\_\_ with God.
- b. We lack \_\_\_\_\_ because we haven't shown \_\_\_\_\_.

Notice in chapter two, vv4-8, Nehemiah's request before the king is very specific. For months, considers what he will need to go to Judea and undertake the magnanimous task of rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. When King Artaxerxes asks: "Well, how can I help you?" (v4), God is already answering Nehemiah's prayer, "Put it in his heart to be kind to me" (1:11). God is faithful to go the way before us if we trust Him. God opens doors that no man can close, and God closes doors no man can open. He is in control.

4. Re-read Nehemiah 2:7-8. What request for the King of kings is heavy on your heart? Perhaps you need time to think through the specifics of your request. In the space below (or on a separate sheet of paper) write down specifically what you need. Ask the Lord to help you. Then when the time is right, present your prayer to God.

Just as Nehemiah stood before Artaxerxes in the Old Testament, blind Bartimaeus stood before Jesus in the New Testament (Mark 10:51). Each of us will have an opportunity to make our requests before the King of kings. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" – and the son of Timaeus said, "My rabbi, I want to see!" What do you want Jesus to do for you, your people, your family? Be specific. Give Him praise, confess your sin, trust Him – and then, be ready to live into God's assignment for you.

**One Year Bible Reading**

Sept. 8: Isaiah 1:1-2:22, 2 Corinthians 10:1-18, Psalm 52:1-9, Proverbs 22:26-27  
 Sept. 9: Isaiah 3:1-5:30, 2 Corinthians 11:1-15, Psalm 53:1-6, Proverbs 22:28-29  
 Sept. 10: Isaiah 6:1-7:25, 2 Corinthians 11:16-33, Psalm 54:1-7, Proverbs 23:1-3  
 Sept. 11: Isaiah 8:1-9:21, 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, Psalm 55:1-23, Proverbs 23:4-5  
 Sept. 12: Isaiah 10:1-11:16, 2 Corinthians 12:11-21, Psalm 56:1-13, Prov. 23:6-8  
 Sept. 13: Isaiah 12:1-14:32, 2 Corinthians 13:1-14, Psalm 57:1-11, Prov. 23:9-11  
 Sept. 14: Isaiah 15:1-18:7, Galatians 1:1-24, Psalm 58:1-11, Proverbs 23:12