

How to Have an Effective Prayer Life Nehemiah 1:5-11

Introduction:

1. Here in our text Nehemiah is heartbroken over the devastation in his beloved city, Jerusalem. Instead of Jerusalem being a light and testimony to the glory of God, Jerusalem was broken down, burned with fire, and was a reproach to God's people.
vs. 3
2. Nehemiah made the best decision he could ever have made - he went to prayer.
vs. 4
3. Last week we began to examine Nehemiah's recorded prayer (vs. 5-11). We learned that there are three vital truths that we must keep in mind every time we make a move to go to God in prayer.
 - God is faithful.
 - God is attentive.
 - God is forgiving.
4. What if I were to ask two questions this morning?
 - How many of you believe in the power of prayer?
 - How much did you actually pray last week?
5. I wonder if there would be a great discrepancy between these two questions.
6. This morning, I would like to examine Nehemiah's prayer. Nehemiah was a servant of God, with a heart for God. God used him mightily to turn things around in Jerusalem, but it all started with prayer.
7. Nehemiah is not a church age saint. He is an Old Testament Jew, praying under the Old Testament law economy. We must keep this in mind. But there are some wonderful lessons that we can learn and apply to our lives as we study Nehemiah's prayer life.

If we desire to have an effective prayer life, we must pray:

Earnestly - vs. 6

1. I want to draw your attention to a very important phrase. Nehemiah said, "...*which I pray before thee now, day and night...*"
2. What does this denote to us? Nehemiah was not flippant about his prayer request. This wasn't a casual sort of thing. He was serious about it. He earnestly sought the Lord.
3. Did you know this is applicable to our prayer lives today? Just as Nehemiah was earnest, Paul taught the church that we are to be earnest in our prayer lives.

Ephesians 6:18

- Notice he said, "*Praying always.*" The word "watching" means "to be sleepless, to keep awake." "Perseverance" means "persistence."
4. Paul taught that we should **labor fervently** (to struggle, to compete for a prize) in our prayers. **Colossians 4:12; cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 2 Timothy 1:3; 1 Timothy 5:5**

Honestly - vs. 7

1. Nehemiah did not go to God extolling his virtues and the goodness of his people, Israel. He didn't go to God with the attitude, "You owe it to me to answer my prayer."
2. Nehemiah was brutally honest with God: "We have dealt corruptly with you, we haven't kept your commandments, and we have repeatedly broken the law of Moses."
3. When you talk to God, you can lay open your heart before Him. In fact, you should! God is looking for there to be congruence between your mouth and your heart.

Romans 10:1

4. When the **words** of your prayer contradict your heart, this is called hypocrisy.
 - **Illustration:** Publican and the Pharisee. **Luke 18:10-14**
5. We are to provide things honest in the sight of the Lord, and this would apply to our prayer lives. **2 Corinthians 8:21**

Intelligently - vs. 8-9

1. In verses 8-9, Nehemiah is basically praying God's Word back to God. He is reminding God of His promises to the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 28 and 30.
2. Nehemiah was praying intelligently for the time period he lived in. He knew what God's Word was to Israel, as written and detailed in the law of Moses. He understood God's Word and God's promises for Israel under the Old Testament law economy.
3. Would a believer today in the body of Christ pray this prayer in verses 8 and 9? Of course not, because we are not Israel, and we are not living under the Old Testament law program.
4. Just as Nehemiah knew God's Word **to him** and his people, we must know God's Word and God's promises **to us** today.
5. It is pleasing to the Lord when we stand on His Word in prayer, but we must do it in an intelligent fashion, understanding God's program for today.
 - If a tsunami is about to hit Daytona, we don't build an ark and pray for God to deliver us. That is not what God is doing today.
 - If I need to cross the Halifax River to go beachside, I don't pray for God to part the Halifax River. That is not what God is doing today.
 - If I am hungry, I don't pray for God to rain manna on my front yard.
6. Just as Moses was Nehemiah's spokesman for his day, who has God established as our spokesman for today in His Word? **Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7** - According to the Bible, Paul is our spokesman. Based on this, notice what Paul commanded. **1 Corinthians 4:16; Philippians 3:17, 4:9; 1 Corinthians 14:37**
7. A believer today should make a thorough study of Paul's thirteen letters and understand the commandments and promises that God has given to **us** through Paul. **2 Timothy 2:7**
8. Like Nehemiah, it pleases God when we pray with an intelligent understanding of His Word.

Specifically - vs. 10-11

1. Notice that based on Israel's position as God's redeemed people (vs. 10), Nehemiah makes a very specific request of God. He desired for God to grant him mercy in the sight of the king so that Nehemiah could travel back to Jerusalem and help restore it.
2. God answered Nehemiah's request in chapter 2 in a big way. Not only did the king give him permission to go, he gave Nehemiah an escort and foots the bill for it!
3. What about today? Can we take our specific requests to the Lord in prayer? Does God want us to pray about the details of our life? The apostle Paul teaches us to pray specifically. **Philippians 4:6**
 - Paul asked believers to pray specifically for his deliverance from prison. **Philippians 1:19; Philemon 22**
 - Some of Paul's prayer requests are recorded in Scripture. **Colossians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:1** - they aren't vague, they are specific.
 - Many of Paul's prayers are recorded in God's Word and they are very specific in nature. **Romans 10:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; Colossians 1:9**
4. Christian, based on your redeemed position in Christ, you can go to God and talk to Him about every detail of your life.
5. You are God's child and He wants you to talk to Him.

In Conclusion:

1. Remember what I asked at the beginning of this message? Do you believe in the power of prayer?
2. Then the logical question is, "Are you praying?"
3. What wonderful application we can make from the prayer of Nehemiah. It isn't meant for us to imitate or recite, but it teaches us some wonderful principles about prayer.
 - Pray earnestly - pray honestly - pray intelligently - pray specifically.
4. May we leave this place, not just **learning** these truths, but actually **practicing** these truths in our daily prayer lives.