

Where the World's Best Leadership finds its Source

Nehemiah 1:4-7



We've already seen Nehemiah's example of leadership in issues of exile (authenticity in relationships) and empathy (relating to the needs of others). This look at the Text and story finds him in utter emotional depletion, yet not turning to his own strengths and strategies but to The Source of all hope and power. It led him into repentance not only for his sins, but of the entire nation; past, present and future. This was his foundation for future confidence. Truly the way up is down first!

When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. Then I said, "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses." Neh. 1:4-7

When Nehemiah heard the news from Hanani, it may have surprised him just how dire the situation had become. It was only thirteen years earlier that the reforms and restoration under Ezra had come to a screeching halt "by force and power" due the sudden edict of Artaxerxes in response to complaints by the enemies of Israel around the city of Jerusalem. (Ezra 4:7-23) His response to sit down on the ground in mourning was a common Jewish practice of his day similar to Ezra and Mordechai. (Ez. 9:3-15; Est. 4:1) This would have included weeping, fasting and a period of mourning. (*Zakheim p45*) It was not very long ago that he and all the Jews were spared due to the intervention of Esther, but more significantly through the fasting and prayer by God's people. God takes it seriously indeed when His people fast and earnestly pray!

We read in chapter 2:1 that it was in the month of Nisan or springtime nearly four months later when Nehemiah finally talked to the king. It's probable that *this entire period of time he was earnestly seeking God*. His prayer has so much to teach and guide us about when beseeching God and hearing from Heaven. How easily we faint in prayer!

Nehemiah's prayer employed a formula that has since become standardized in Jewish prayers and for good reason. It opens with passionate praise, follows with humble confession and repentance, then concludes with an appeal to God on the basis of His unchanging character as a Promise Keeper. Implicit in all of that is this: the person who would lead others must first be in tune with the Authority Who guides and controls all things! Divine favor is essential for beneficial outcomes in the realm of human endeavors.



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Wednesday Devotions
Schedule for February:

12 – Dr. Daryl Crouch, Founder
of Everyone's Wilson
HHR 4

19 – Evangelist Bobby Stewart,
Founder of faith for America
HHR 4

26 – Dave Ramsey, Founder of
Ramsey Solutions and author of
Financial Peace University
HHR 1

Next Bible Study will be
February 18, 2025
Topic:



Nehemiah's Pause to Praise

We will find throughout this account that Nehemiah is a person of calculated, swift, and decisive action. Given that quality about him, it's amazing that not only is four months a long time of prayerful preparation for his ask and task, but even in the prayer itself, he deliberately delays the cry for help to focus on *who God is*. Sometimes we hurry to act when we should hurry to pray and repent! Can you think of a time when you got into deep weeds because were in a hurry and you failed to pray? _____

"O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God" How would you describe what Nehemiah is acknowledging about God? _____

Nehemiah recognized that the human problems he was facing were really spiritual in nature, and that reminded him of his humble place! He had not forgotten that this was the God who revealed Himself as YHVH, sometimes translated as Yahweh, the God who said, "I will be whom I will be, or, I am who I am;" the self-existent One. No human can say that. God alone is important (great) and to be feared (awesome). Until we return to seeing God for who He really is, there can be no great move in our lives.

He is also the **"God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands."** Nehemiah went before God remembering that this God promised by way of a covenant to always love and preserve the people of Israel, even though they had violated that covenant even before it was begun with the incident of the Golden calf! (Deut.9) As Moses did then, so Nehemiah reminded God that these people were His people by His own choice and word (**"For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and outstretched arm."** Deut. 9:29). It makes us think that when we speak back God's own words to Him, we are acknowledging the all-knowing God *and* our forgetful selves! Yet we take hope that in Christ we also are chosen by God! Nehemiah certainly was placing himself at God's mercy, expressing that he trusted in those mercies!

In whom are we trusting as we go about the tasks and challenges of our lives? If we say that we are depending on God, but are not praying first before our day or tasks begin, then it's doubtful that God is looking upon our work with the same kind of divine favor. Nehemiah sincerely sought after God because the opening of his prayer led naturally into heart-searching and confession. It placed him in a position to be honest, true and right before God, and thereby he received a hearing before the Court of Heaven.

A.W. Tozer once said, *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."* Nehemiah saw God as great and worthy of worshipping submission. He is the God who above all things is love, who keeps His covenant all while knowing fully the nature of humanity and still moves toward them in love, particularly for those who love and obey Him in relationship and faithfulness. Ask yourself, "How do I really see God? Is love the first thing that I think about Him?" If we continually had Nehemiah's view of God, it would drive us to our knees in regular and sincere repentance, and then passion for our respective mission and calling. About 100 years before this time but in the same exile, the prophet Daniel said, **"but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action."** (Daniel 11:32b) Was Nehemiah part of fulfilling that prophecy?

What about us? Do we really know God in a way that our prayers are heard, our lives are pure and surrendered, and God moves when we pray? Richard Blackaby, the son of the author of the book, "Experiencing God," said the other day, "Once when my children had a need, they came to me and said, 'Dad, could you ask grandpa to pray about this?' I said sure, but told them I would be glad to pray for them. They said, 'Yes, we know. But when grandpa prays, we know heaven hears!'"