


THE PRAYERS

of Nehemiah

ARROW PRAYERS, TRUSTING PRAYERS,
REMEMBERING PRAYERS

**A FOUR WEEK
DEVOTIONAL**

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The Prayers of Nehemiah - Part One; How to Pray

How do you behave in a crisis? What is your first response? Fight or flight? Fear or Faith? Prayer or complaining?

Today we are going to embark upon a new series called The Prayers of Nehemiah. Would it surprise you to know there are fourteen prayers within the short book of Nehemiah? Over the next few weeks, we are going to learn how we can use the prayers of a servant of the Lord to transform our prayer lives.

Please take a minute to read Nehemiah 1 [Here](#).

Some Background

Nehemiah just learned that the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem were living unprotected because the fallen city walls had not yet been rebuilt. This concerned Nehemiah, so he took action by praying and fasting.

Nehemiah's Prayer

We are going to see that Nehemiah's prayer in chapter one is similar to the PRAY (Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield) format of praying. ([Click HERE](#) for more on the PRAY method and a free printable)

Praise

What is the point of having a conversation with God if we don't acknowledge Him first? I think it is rude of me to jump into my prayers without appreciating the One with whom I am conversing. Isaiah 61:3 tells us to put on a garment of praise. Bringing an offering of praise to the Lord is like showing up at your best friend's door with a warm loaf of banana bread.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus teaches us to begin prayer by acknowledging God and praising Him. Nehemiah also begins his prayer with a similar pattern.

Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments. Nehemiah 1:5

Repent

Having just had new carpet installed, I wanted to keep it clean, free of stains and odors for as long as possible. So those first few months we took off our dirty shoes as soon as we came into the house.

When I come before God in prayer, I want to make sure I have removed the unclean, sinful things in my heart before laying my requests before Him. These sins in my heart, both known and unknown, can hinder my walk with the Lord. (I wrote more about this [HERE](#).)

Once again, we see both in the Lord's Prayer (Forgive us our trespasses) and in Nehemiah's prayer, a familiar format, by moving from praise to repentance.

I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees, and laws you gave your servant Moses. Nehemiah 1:6-7

Ask

We have a No Soliciting sign on our front door. The vacuum cleaner salesman and pest control solicitors are not allowed to approach us and ask for anything. Luckily, God does not have such stipulations for us or what we can ask for in prayer.

You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:14

If you have done the previous two steps, your mind and soul are now in a better position to ask for what you want.

Interesting fact: The cupbearer's job is to taste the wine and make sure it is safe for the king to drink.

As cupbearer, Nehemiah had access to the king's ear, and his position of trust (testing for poison in the wine) gave him unprecedented access to the king. Before

going to the king with a request to go help rebuild Jerusalem, Nehemiah first asked God for favor from the king.

Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man. Nehemiah 1:11

Here again, we see similarities to the Lord's Prayer! "Give us this day, our daily bread." God is ready to supply us with everything we ask for, as long as it is within His will.

Yield

My boys, when they were children, would ask if they could walk to the neighborhood park alone. I insisted that they waited until I could go with them. It would not have been safe for them, at that age, to make the trek to the creek to chase frogs or to the swings to try to go high enough to touch the clouds on their own.

After waiting to go with mom, they were able to trek further down the creek with my guidance, and I was able to push them on the swings to go higher. By submitting their wills to that of the parent, the adventure was even grander than they expected. It is in the offering of our will to God that we can go on a grand adventure, too!

Nehemiah shows his heart as a servant of the Lord who yields to the will of God, by using the word *servant* repeatedly in his prayer. Anytime we see repetition in the Word; it is something to pay attention to. We see the word servant used eight times in this one prayer!

Let your ear be attentive, and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. Nehemiah 1:6

Every prayer we offer up to God is an act of yielding our wills to God's. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. When we come to the place in our hearts where we recognize God's will for our lives as most important, we genuinely yield our ways and see a change in our lives.

After Prayer Comes Action

Nehemiah's big ask in this prayer is for a favor from the king. After praying, it is time to put his faith in action and take his request before the king. Nehemiah knows asking King Artaxerxes for this favor could be dangerous, as the king is the one who earlier issued the decree to stop work on the city of Jerusalem.

But with God, all things are possible. The act of asking for great things of a great God grows our faith stronger.

Join me next week as we see how this high ask plays out between Nehemiah and King Artaxerxes.

Heavenly Father, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, hear the prayers of your servant. We confess we have not always obeyed your commandments, laws, or decrees. We are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed with your great strength and mighty hand. Give us, your servants, peace tonight as we speak our prayers and ask for your favor in our lives. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The Prayers of Nehemiah - Part Two; Arrow Prayers

The king said to me, “What is it you want?” Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king. “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.” Nehemiah 2:4-5

The Situation at Hand

Last week we left off with Nehemiah in prayer as he prepares to ask King Artaxerxes to let him go to Jerusalem and help his people.

The opportunity has arisen for Nehemiah to ask the king for his favor. Nehemiah was nervous and afraid as he approached the king, so he shoots off a quick prayer as the request to be sent to Jerusalem forms on his tongue.

What is an arrow prayer?

Arrow prayers are quick, one-sentence prayers that you can shoot off amid any life situation. These prayers are useful when you are in the middle of a crisis, problem, or daily activity. They can also be prayers of thanks or praise when we are delighted with God.

We see an example of an arrow prayer in verse four of Nehemiah. As Nehemiah is walking toward the king, he quickly shoots off an arrow prayer. We don't know what his prayer was, but it might have sounded like, “God of heaven, give me favor with the king,” or “God of heaven, protect me.”

Whatever Nehemiah prayed; we know God answered his prayer. Nehemiah modeled an effective prayer method we can incorporate into our daily lives.

Arrow prayers in your daily life.

My friend Judy and I were often in the car together as we shared rides to our weekly Bible Study. She would shoot off arrow prayers all the time. If we made a

green light, she would thank God for His favor, If we saw an accident, she would pray for help for those impacted. She peppered our conversations with intermittent arrow prayers, often responding with a “praise the Lord” or “God help ...”. I loved learning how to use arrow prayers from my friend Judy; she inspired me in my prayer life.

As a mother of a teenager and young adult, I often shoot off arrow prayers for their protection as they climb into cars with their friends, or as they travel long distances to visit friends.

I use arrow prayers in my work, too. I work in customer service, and sometimes I have to offer up a prayer asking for God’s help to keep my moods in check or for His grace on a tough call.

Arrow prayers don’t have to be something used only in a crisis or emergency. An arrow prayer of praise can be offered up when we notice something good in our day. Perhaps when you see a rainbow, you shoot off a prayer thanking God for His promises. Hearing the birds sing as we wake up can remind us to start with a quick prayer of thanks for the day ahead.

Arrow prayers as a personal mantra.

I used to smoke, and as I was quitting, I raised a short prayer every time I wanted a cigarette. I used the same prayer every time, making it my mantra, or cry for help, in my moment of weakness. The prayer I used during this time was a part of the Lord’s Prayer. I would pray, “Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.” That was it, a quick prayer for God’s help and intervention, shot up frequently, consistently, and earnestly. It worked; I was able to quit smoking.

Arrow prayers can strengthen our faith.

These short prayers throughout our day and weaved within our prayer life will strengthen our walk with the Lord. All prayers are based upon the fact we recognize God as the Author of all life and the one whose power and strength we rely upon. As we pray continuously throughout our days, we are drawn closer to the Lord and this helps us trust God in other areas of our lives.

Arrow prayers are not magic.

These short prayers are most effective when they are part of an ongoing, prayerful relationship with God. They are not a substitute for regular, personal prayer time.

We read about Nehemiah's prayer last week as an example of a prayer that came from a deep understanding of the nature of God, His ways, and His heart. This prayer came from the heart of a man who knew God personally.

If we want God to hear our emergency prayers, we need to make sure we are cultivating a strong relationship with the one answering our prayers!

The situation at hand.

So, the situation at hand now is that Nehemiah finds favor with the king and is granted permission to go. As soon permission was granted, he begins to ask for additional help from the king. Nehemiah knew that his prayers were being answered and that answered prayers often come from the boldness to pray in faith for others to help us. King Artaxerxes then provided him with letters and a cavalry to aid him.

But in verse 10, we see some people are not happy the king approved or supported Nehemiah's mission to promote the welfare of the Israelites. We find Sanballat and Tobiah somewhat disturbed at this new development. We will follow more of that story next week.

What are some of your regular arrow prayers? How do you think incorporating more arrow prayers in your life will draw you closer to God? Or create a deeper prayer life?

Heavenly Father, thank you for hearing all of our prayers. We recognize you are the only one who can meet our needs and strengthen us in our weakness. We gladly put the expected results of our prayers into your hands, trusting you to work everything according to your purposes. We long to have a deeper relationship with you and for our prayer life to be an effective tool in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Prayers of Nehemiah - Part Three; Trusting Prayers

They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet the threat. Nehemiah 4:8-9

Here's the situation.

Nehemiah has arrived in Jerusalem to help the people rebuild the city walls to protect themselves. Not everybody is happy about this. Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, was much incensed over this. Sanballat may have had his eye on the position of governor of Judea, where Jerusalem was located, but Nehemiah's arrival has ruined his plans, putting him in a terrible mood!

Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed those rebuilding the wall in an attempt to get them to give up on what could have been an impossible feat. However, Nehemiah, as always, responded to the threats and ridicule with prayer. Because he knew nothing was impossible for God, he continued to put his trust in the God of the impossible and encouraged the builders to remember their calling and God's purpose for the project. Nehemiah knew his God would help.

Prayer does not give you special powers.

Prayer does not give you special powers. Praying is an act of yielding our wills to God so His power can work through us. We are not trying to convince God to change our circumstances but to prepare us to be involved in His activity.

I have spent many years praying for God to help me with my diet and eating habits. I wish that God would zap me and the pounds would drop off. I prefer my prayers would make dieting easy; I do not like to do hard things.

I went on a 40-day sugar fast earlier this year and it was hard, but I completed it. After completing the fast, I had not lost even one pound. I was very disappointed with God for not changing my weight and asked Him what the point of the fast was.

He showed me how I was more focused on Him changing my circumstances, while He was focused on changing my mindset. With this revelation, I am now prepared to start a new diet program that will be even harder and require longer than 40 days. Guess what? My confidence is healthy because I know I can do hard things with God's help.

A partnership with God

God did have a purpose for the 40-day sugar fast and it was to prepare me for the next part of my journey to a healthier body, mind, and soul. Guess what? I have been on this new health program for almost exactly 40 days, and I have lost 21 pounds. Wow! Without doing the preparation earlier this year, I would not have had the confidence to walk into this new health program that requires intense focus and change. When we partner with God, both in prayer and in obedience, we experience His perfect plan, a plan for success in our lives.

Nehemiah consistently combined prayer with preparation and planning. He was serious about keeping watch over what God had entrusted to him. He showed trust in God even while taking necessary precautions by posting a guard over their work. Trusting God does not mean we do nothing. Action does not mean we do not trust.

Trusting Prayers

There is a false belief amongst some people that if you take action after praying about a situation, you are not truly trusting God. For example: Praying for God to protect your home and then installing an alarm system. But Nehemiah does precisely that, he prays for God's protection of the building site and then posts guards on the site. But remember, we get to partner with God in His plans and that means taking action is an act of trust. Read that again; taking action is an act of trust.

I am trusting God when I enlist the help of my doctor when I am sick. I am trusting God when I installed the alarm system at our house. I am trusting God when I enlist the help of a coach on my new health program.

So, as we pray for God to work in our lives, it is essential to ask Him what steps He wants us to take in our circumstances. Does He want us to hire someone to help us? Is He asking you to stand guard over your project? Has He requested that you prepare your home for ministry? When we take action to partner with God in His divine plans, we will see Him complete the impossible tasks we need to be done.

Let's pray and ask God to show us what our part is and how we can trust Him in the process.

Heavenly Father, we look to you to share your vision and plans for our future with us. We submit our will to yours and ask what we can do to partner with you. We desire to walk in obedience to you, not because we are desperate for our circumstances to change, but because we want to love you and live life fully within your will for us. Thank you for your faithfulness in preparing a way for us to serve you and fulfill your purpose for us. In Jesus's name. Amen.

The Prayers of Nehemiah - Part Four; Prayers of Remembrance

“Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’ Nehemiah 1:8-9

As we wrap up our series on the prayers of Nehemiah, we are going to look at seven prayers Nehemiah often repeated throughout his story: the prayers of remembrance.

Nehemiah used the word remember frequently in prayer (1:8, 5:19, 6:14, 13:14, 22, 29, 31). In his opening prayer, we see him asking God to remember a promise He made, not because he was afraid God forgot, but as a way to show that he believed in God’s faithfulness. In the other prayers of remembrance, he asks God to remember other people and himself.

Don’t Forget.

The idea of reminding God of something may sound audacious to us; after all, He is God. But reminding God of the promises He has made helps *us* remember that He is the God who can be trusted to keep His promises.

When our boys were younger, I often made promises, especially when I wanted them to behave a certain way or accomplish something. We had an ongoing commitment of reward attached to their grades when they were in grade school. They got \$3 for every A and \$2 for every B on their report cards. Every time report cards came out, they reminded us of our promise. They were holding on to our promise, and when they told us of it, we were faithful to fulfill our word. They never wondered if we would meet our obligation; they were exhibiting their trust in our word by reminding us.

In the same way, when we ask God to remember His Word, He is faithful to it. In Isaiah 43:26, it says, “Put Me in remembrance...” It’s not that God has forgotten,

but He wants us to remember what He said in His Word. When we go to God with His Word, it builds our faith.

In Nehemiah's opening prayer (which you can read more about [HERE](#)), he reminds God of His covenant promise to His people. By including this reminder in the prayer, he demonstrates his knowledge of God's character and his trust in God's faithfulness.

Remember them.

Have you ever heard or even said, "Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord"? We derive this popular phrase from Deuteronomy 32 ("Vengeance is mine.") and Romans 12:19 ("Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.") Nehemiah believes it is important to remind God of His duty to execute justice, not for God's benefit, but for his own.

Nehemiah 6:14 says, "Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done...they have been trying to intimidate me."

This prayer of remembrance is directed to God as a reminder that Nehemiah is doing what is right and acknowledges that he is leaving the outcome to God. He was entrusting others into God's hands for just judgment rather than trying to exact vengeance himself.

What a lesson for us to learn! I have often, in my anger over how someone has treated me, allowed my mind to wander into a place of revenge. But when I can release my emotions to God and let Him be God, I receive the gifts of peace of mind and a clean heart.

Remember me.

Out of the seven remembrance prayers, the one Nehemiah most often spoke was, "Remember me, my God" (5:19, 13:14, 22, 31). Some people have criticized these prayers as self-glorification. But when we look at the person Nehemiah was, his knowledge of the Lord, his consistency in prayer, and his trust in the Lord, we can ascertain that self-glorification is the last thing on Nehemiah's mind when he prays, "Remember me, my God."

I think Nehemiah used these prayers to keep his motives for action clear in his mind. They were statements of confidence that God judges favorably those who sincerely seek to do his will.

In one of the final “Remember Me” prayers found in Nehemiah 13:13, he says, “Remember me for this my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its service.” Perhaps Nehemiah is saying this to make sure that, even though he is not perfect or without sin, his efforts and intentions were good. He is asking God to not blot out what has been done with a faithful heart and to reveal anything in his heart that needs to be brought before the Lord and dealt with.

This is like David’s prayer in Psalm 139, where he ends with, “Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Throughout the Bible, we see God’s people asking Him to “remember” them. They are not asking for remembrance out of fear of God forgetting; they are asking for God to touch their lives, to remind them of His faithfulness. We pray the “Remember Me” prayers, lest we forget!

Heavenly Father, teach me how to pray “Remember Me” prayers that will change my life and keep me in remembrance of You. Today I will stand upon your promises to remember me and bless me. (Psalm 115:12) Thank you for your faithfulness, for taking charge of my enemies, and for creating in me a clean heart that I might serve with sincere motives. In Jesus’ name. Amen.