

# Nehemiah—Building for the Future

## STUDY 1

### A LEADER'S PRAYER LIFE

Nehemiah Chapter 1

#### Introduction

In this first chapter we gain some very helpful insight into Nehemiah's personal prayer life. Here we can discern principles concerning what a Christian leader's prayer life should include. He also gives us a pattern of how to pray when wanting a nation to be restored under God: politically, economically and spiritually.

#### Opening Discussion Questions

How important do you consider prayer in the Christian life?

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Have you ever been moved to tears when praying?

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What was it about?

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Did you receive a positive answer?

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As a group, read Nehemiah Chapter 1:1-11.

Nehemiah 1:1 “The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa.”

The month of Kislev: mid-November to mid-December 445 B.C. (Winter). The twentieth year: refers to the 20th year of King Artaxerxes' reign who was ruler over the vast Persian empire from 464 to 423 B.C. (The Message of Nehemiah, The Bible Speaks Today series. Inter-Varsity Press. Raymond Brown. Page 14. Copyright 1998.)

Susa: Capital of the Persian Empire and the site of the king's winter palace (In Southwest Iran east of the Tigris River). (Ezra and Nehemiah, Christ Centred Exposition. James M. Hamilton Jr. Holman Reference. Page 99 . Copyright 2014.)

1. Many sceptics argue the Bible is nothing more than vague outdated religious sayings and is not rooted in history. How could you use Nehemiah 1:1 to refute that idea?

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Read Nehemiah 1:2

2. Who or what does the “Jewish Remnant” refer to? Read Ezra 7:7-9 to provide insight.

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3. What is significant about the fact that the wall was broken down? (Neh. 1:3)

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4. What do we learn about Nehemiah’s heart for his nation in verse 4?

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4a. What is particularly on your heart to pray for at the moment?

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Invite two or three to share and these needs could be mentioned in prayer at the end of the study during the final prayer time.

5. In verse 5, how did Nehemiah approach God as he started to pray? (Note that when we read "LORD" the word in all capitals, it means that in the original Hebrew text God's personal name "Yahweh" was used.)

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6. What is Nehemiah confessing and who does he include? (Neh. 1:6-7)

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7. Reflect upon Nehemiah 1:8-9 and Deuteronomy 30:1-5. What principle is Nehemiah using in his prayer life here?

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8. Examine Nehemiah 1:10-11. Nehemiah's prayer finishes with a specific request. What success is Nehemiah asking God for?

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8a. Why is it important to pray specifically at times?

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“Cupbearer to the king”

Writing in the same century as Nehemiah, the Greek historian Herodotus explains that the cupbearer’s office was highly esteemed among the Persian people. The wine steward was a man of recognised dignity in court circles, entirely trustworthy, the king’s confidant and next in rank to princes. (The Message of Nehemiah, The Bible Speaks Today series. Raymond Brown. Inter-Varsity Press. Page 41. Copyright 1998.)

Read Nehemiah Chapter 2:1-5.

When Nehemiah commenced praying and fasting it was the month of Kisley which is mid-November to mid-December 445 B.C. (Neh. 1:1). When Nehemiah brought an important request to King Artaxerxes it was the month of Nisan which is mid-March to mid-April 444 B.C. and the beginning of the Persian and Jewish New Year (Neh. 2:1). Both are reckoned to fall within the twentieth year of Artaxerxes’ reign. (Ezra and Nehemiah, Tyndale Commentaries. Derek Kidner. Inter-Varsity Press. Page 84 & 86. Copyright 1979.)

6. After Nehemiah had been praying for 4-5 months, he then took action. Why is it important to act on our prayers?

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9a. Do you think he felt apprehensive in approaching the king with his request? Why?

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The following is a summary of five broad principles Nehemiah used when praying. Conclude your time by utilizing these principles and spending the last 10 or 15 minutes of your time praying. You may choose to pray for your nation or the city where you live. Another option is your church or a specific ministry. After you have finished praying, be mindful of part

E. Do you need to act upon any of your prayers?

A: Pray in the awe of God (Neh. 1:4-6a).

B: Confess sin (national, historic and personal) (Neh. 1:6b-7). C: Claim God's promises (Neh. 1:8-9).

D: Pray specifically (Neh. 1:10-11). E: Act on your prayers (Neh. 2:1-5).

## Study Notes: