The Rebuilt Life
Studies in Nehemiah

Session 7 – Repentance and Renewal | Nehemiah Chapter 9

The revival at the Water Gate three weeks earlier was gaining momentum. Observing the yearly Feast of Tabernacles had been more joyous than anyone could remember. For seven days, they gathered around to hear Ezra read from God's Word. For seven nights, families camped out and taught their children the stories of how God faithfully took care of His children so long ago. The festival was over but people lingered, wanting more.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what Nehemiah can teach us about corporate prayer and individual commitment.
- Consider how God's mercy and faithful ways can be traced in your own story.
- Pray honest prayers that elevate our focus and fervency for God.

Ice Breaker

If you have ever stood in line or in a large crowd for hours, what were you there to see or do?

From Feasting to Fasting

Nehemiah 9:1–5

Two days after the week-long festival concluded, another assembly was planned. This was not an official feast day, but the people came to worship and renew their commitment to the Lord.

1. From this scene, it is evident that Ezra's daily reading (Nehemiah 8:18) has made a significant impact on the people. In what way?

    a. Fasting, sackcloth, and dust on the head were outward signs of mourning and repentance. Today, if someone is serious about putting away sin in their life, how might they show it?

2. Rediscovering God in His Word was like a magnet for the people. The more they listened, the more conscious they were of their sin and the Lord's faithfulness. As Romans 2:4 says, the kindness of God leads us to repentance. These verses are a *small sample* of all that Ezra read to the people. Briefly note how you see evidence of God's kindness to them.

   Deuteronomy 4:5–8

   Deuteronomy 4:27–31

   Deuteronomy 30:15–20

3. For three hours, the descendants of Israel stood and listened while the Word of God was read aloud. Then for another three hours they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God. The word used here for *confess* means to acknowledge what is accurate and true.

   a. When we, as individuals or as a community, confess our sins (verse 2) what are we acknowledging about ourselves?

   b. When we, as individuals or as a community, confess God (verse 3) we are acknowledging what is accurate and true *about God* in our worship and praise. When you think of it this way, how valuable does knowing God by reading His Word become to you?

Good to Know

"They confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers." They confessed their own sins, as individuals and corporately as the community of God's chosen people.

The iniquities of their fathers, means they acknowledged Israel's history of sin and chronic rebellion toward God.

Memory Verse

As you memorize this verse, make it part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Stand up and praise the Lord your God, for He lives from everlasting to everlasting!
Nehemiah 9:5 NLT

Think About It . . .

What will you stand up and praise the Lord for today?

What Happens When God's People Pray?

Nehemiah 9:6–38
The Levites direct the people in a corporate prayer of confession and praise, probably written by Ezra. By reviewing their history, this prayer confessed God's mercy and faithfulness to His people. In every generation, at every twist and turn, God had remained true to His promise.

1. They weren't just reciting facts, they were tracing the pattern of God's faithfulness and their fickleness. They recalled their undeserved blessings and God's unfailing love. From what you have read, give a *simple* description of:

   a. Israel's cycle of behavior toward God:

   b. God's character and response toward Israel:

   c. Their prayer of renewed commitment to God:

2. If we were to recite our own spiritual history, would it resemble Israel's story in some way? What milestones do we find along the path He has brought us? Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have seen and experienced firsthand of God's goodness. Share your thoughts.

"What a blessing it would be to reflect upon His goodness! I think we could come to the conclusion that God's mercy with a sinner is only equaled and perhaps outmatched, by His patience with the saints, you and me."

Alan Redpath
Victorious Christian Service

3. What happens when God's people pray? The prayer of Nehemiah 9 begins with a call to action and concludes with the people renewing their commitment to the Lord. Can you hear the call?

Stand up and praise the Lord your God, for He lives from everlasting to everlasting!
Nehemiah 9:5 NLT

From where we sit, we have to look between the lines to see Ezra and Nehemiah in this chapter. Nothing is mentioned of either man, but do you see what they are doing? They are standing with their people, arms raised, calling out, confessing and worshipping the Lord their God. Both men had wept over the ruins. They spent time on their knees, fasting and praying for God's people. Now their prayers were being answered. Revival had come to Jerusalem.

The people responded by pledging obedience to God in every part of their lives: their home life, their social life, and their church life. It happened in Nehemiah's day and it can happen again. Here. Now.

Do you believe the prayers of one man or woman can have a remarkable impact? What if the one becomes a few? What if the few includes you?

Read the verses below and consider what God can do when His people pray. Choose at least one that you will consistently pray, for yourself and for the church, in the weeks to come.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Acts 3:19

Colossians 4:2–3

"Revival starts with the church and then affects the world. Revival is getting back to the Christian life as it was meant to be lived."

"We cannot organize a revival but we can agonize for one in prayer."

Pastor Greg Laurie

Gospel at a Glance: God's Mercy | The focus of this prayer is not the history of Israel's rebellion but the history of God's unrelenting mercy. In the Old Testament, mercy is an important word defining God's longsuffering and forgiving nature. It describes more than what God does, it describes who He *is*. When God made a covenant with Abraham, He swore by His own unchanging nature (Hebrews 6:18). When Moses prayed *show me Your* glory, God passed before him proclaiming His own name: "The Lord, the Lord God, *merciful* and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin" (Exodus 34:6–7). God could have abandoned Israel for their perpetual rebellion but it is not in His character to do so. God keeps His promises. In Jesus, the unrelenting mercy of God has its greatest expression. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Adoration **C**onfession **T**hankfulness **S**upplication

"Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." Ephesians 6:18 NIV

God sparked Nehemiah to pray and take action. Others joined in and the work began. With God's blessing, power, and protection, the wall was rebuilt. In each session, we will take time to pray—for others and for ourselves, for our church, our communities, and our nation.

As a focus for prayer, you can use the memory verse, another scripture, or simply what the Lord has impressed on you from the chapter. No need to be profound or elaborate, just authentic.

Record your simple prayer, including each element here.

A _____

C _____

T _____

S _____

Group Prayer Requests

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Notes

Notes

©2017-2018 Harvest Christian Fellowship, All Rights Reserved.