

Word notes Sunday 29/5/2011 Tony Hodge
Nehemiah – Man of Prayer

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Nehemiah 1

Nehemiah was born after the people of Israel had been in exile for many years yet his heart was turned to God and his concern for the remnant now rebuilding Jerusalem led him to enquire of all travellers how things were going. On hearing they were in difficulties his first response was prayer. The times of Ezra & Nehemiah, their leadership and ministry and the response of the people led to the re-establishment of devotion to the one true God, which survived through the intertestamental period preparing the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

Nehemiah's response at the start and at various other places through the book indicates a lifestyle of prayer. His prayer life was vital, genuine and sacrificial. His prayer recorded in verses 4-11 are one example from scripture of how to pray, he: Looked up to God, looked inward in penitence, looked back in gratitude and forward in confidence. The time difference of at least 100 days between hearing the news and bringing his request to the king (1:4 & 2:1) tell of his patience and persistence, while the clarity of his requests to the king indicate the preparation he made in prayer with his God.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Read Nehemiah's example prayer in chapter 1:4-11. I've analysed this in the summary above into 4 sections, can you find which verses are which? Do you agree with my analysis or would you put it another way?

It was at least 100 days between Nehemiah hearing the news of Jerusalem and asking the king if he could go and help. Do you think the prayer in 1:4-11 is his immediate response to the news, a summary of how he prayed over the period or the resulting prayer at the end of a time of fasting? What verse in chapter 1 supports your conclusion?

Verse 4 is Nehemiah's response to hearing of the plight of his people in Jerusalem. What was it and how does it compare with your response to similar news?

Privately (ie not shared with everyone) on a scale of 1-10 rate your regular prayer life. Now consider and discuss what has helped each in the past to step up their private prayer life so that others can benefit and grow. This may be help in getting going, in how to pray or how to keep praying.

Set some goals and each write them down. For example: How would you like to improve your prayer life; how can you get more involved in the prayer life of the fellowship?

Last week Helen talked about wanting to make a difference. If God has spoken to you about how you might "make a difference" are you praying this through in preparation as Nehemiah did? How might you start?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Praying for our family and friends and others across the world who do not know Jesus as Lord is an important if not vital part of our witness. Like Nehemiah it's the starting point. Thinking especially of those nearby, to whom we are actively seeking to witness, set up a prayer strategy for them that all can be a part of. eg have a list that you pray for together each week or individually through the week, keeping a note of any answers in terms of contact, evangelistic chats, ministry or interest in knowing Jesus that can encourage all.