

Rebuilding with God: Praying for Renewal

[Nehemiah 1:1-11](#) || Pastor Paul Hahn || 26 September 2021

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Has journaling ever been a part of your life? Describe what the experience has been like. For those who have not, what other means do you use to work through your thoughts and ideas?

Worship: [Haggai 2:3-5](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Nehemiah 1:1-11](#) (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

Our era of church history has many deficits, but perhaps the largest is in prayer. We're bad at it: uncomfortable and uncertain, and most of us devote less time to it than we'd like to admit. But if Christianity is a relationship with our Father, then it demands conversation. Prayer is therefore the heavy lifting of our faith. And learning to pray means turning to our Father and asking for His help, that we might learn prayers of renewal, prayers that bring true forgiveness and hope, that deepen our knowledge and closeness to God, that bring change to our lives and to the world. Nehemiah shows us how these prayers for renewal flow:

Prayers for renewal start with invocation, calling our Father to listen attentively (v5-6a) as we confess our sins and tell Him our needs. Praying like this takes confidence, boldness – seeing ourselves as God's beloved children who have the access to talk to Him this way. It means seeing God as the place where our souls find renewal and rest. By invoking our Lord's name, we give our prayers a sense of confidence and urgency. Remembering His names gives our prayers a vibrancy and depth they more than likely lack. And as we ponder the names of God – to look them up and see what they mean and how they are used – we begin to speak to God with more variety and purpose.

Prayer moves to confession // Coming before God honestly means having an awareness of our sin. And this will lead us to confession; it should be a felt need. For Nehemiah, this meant declaring that he and his family had sinned as well as confessing on behalf of his nation. Identifying the sins of the broader body of Christ might feel foreign, but this is a plea for mercy for God's people. People who know their sinfulness pray very differently than those confident in their own righteousness. Nehemiah labels himself and his people as shameful and treacherously unfaithful. And we need to plumb the depths of our sin just as deeply. We need Nehemiah's humility, understanding and authenticity. Because one reason we lack the deep change we yearn for is the lack of depth to our confession.

Prayer remembers grace // God asks for us to be faithful. And we are to call upon Him with full acknowledgement of our sin and brokenness – because He promises to work faithfulness and healing into our hearts. This means praying God's promises back to Him, showing that we are listening, trusting and living into our Gospel hope. As Nehemiah did, we can remind God that we are redeemed by His power, so that we might be used for His purposes. Because that is what it means for us to flourish. Our God is passionate about His grace being active in our lives. And seeing the depths of His redemptive love and power will bring Him glory.

Prayer makes the big ask // Nothing is too big or impossible with God. So we cannot be afraid to make the "big ask" of our Father – to bring even seemingly insurmountable needs before Him. Because God can accomplish more than we could ever dare to hope. We see and know this because of the cross. Which means for us, the real heavy lifting is prayer. Because yes, prayer matters immensely. It is God's means to unlock His will and make it active in the world. He has ordained to move in response to the prayers of His people. So we must pray and never give up, just as Christ tells us. For this is how we demonstrate the reality of our faith on earth.

Discussion Questions *(You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)*

First Step: Calling on God's Name

- How would you describe your prayer life? How would you describe the prayer life of your CG?
 - Are there any prerequisites for prayer? If so, what are they?
- What names for God do you use when you pray?
 - What is the value of calling on the different names of God in prayer?

Second Step: Let us Confess Our Sins

- What would it look like for us (like Nehemiah) to begin confession with an identification of our corporate/communal brokenness and sin? How might this change our posture about confessing our own sins?
- How do you create space for confession in your prayers?
 - Is there anything God is inviting you to concerning confession of sin?

Third step: Remember the Promises of God

- Why is it critical for the truth of God's Word to be the foundation of our prayer life?
- Why should we ask God to remember His promises in prayer?
 - Does God need to be reminded of His promises?
 - Which promises of God can you add to your prayers? How would they help?

Fourth Step: Make Big Asks of God

- What do you think the "Big Ask" is for our congregation?
 - What is the "Big Ask" in your life or in your family?
- What did you learn about prayer from Nehemiah's prayer in this chapter?

Prayer

Praise God through the alphabet together. Example - Lord, you are Almighty, Bread of Life, Comforter, Deliverer, Excellent, Father, Gracious, etc. For this week's prayer guide click [HERE](#).

Engage & Experience: Generous Service

English Speaking Ministry in Tokyo

Please pray for our Global Outreach partner in Tokyo: Grace Harbor Church. Grace Harbor is reaching young Japanese students through an English-speaking ministry. In August, PCC collaborated with Redeemer SD to put on an English-speaking conference – all over Zoom. Over 35 people participated! Please pray for more opportunities like this to build relationships. If you would like to participate in our next virtual missions trip to Tokyo or to find out how your CG can support our global partners in Tokyo, please email Alex: alexmckee@pacificcrossroads.org