

Character Studies from Daniel and Nehemiah

This week – How a believer wants to be useful to God above everything else.

Nehemiah prayed, “O LORD God of heaven, the great God ... hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night.” Nehemiah 1v5,6.

Bible Readings for this week:

(Choose a regular time each day to read the Bible and pray whether it be when you first wake up or just before you go to sleep)

Day	Bible Reading	Tick When Read
Sunday	Ezra 1v1-11 (Cyrus orders restoration of the temple)	
Monday	Ezra 7v1-11,27-28 (Ezra’s joyful obedience of God)	
Tuesday	Nehemiah 1v1-11 (Nehemiah hears the bad news)	
Wednesday	Nehemiah 2v1-11 (Jerusalem’s ruins assessed)	
Thursday	Nehemiah 2v12-20 (The God of Heaven will prosper)	
Friday	Psalms 86 (David’s prayer to his merciful God)	
Saturday	Matthew 6v1-15 (The Lord’s prayer - our model)	

Important Thought for us Today: Do we really pray? Nehemiah’s prayers were answered and blessed because he really prayed. He meant what he said; it was from his heart. He didn’t pray quick, casual and selfish prayers, or recite other people’s words. His prayers were earnest, concentrating on matters that were important to his God; the forgiveness of his own sin; help from God to represent His cause; the desire that unsaved loved ones find the Lord. We can be upset and disappointed when we feel that God has not heard or answered our prayers. We need to test our prayers as they must include all the elements outlined by the Lord Jesus Christ in His model prayer (Matthew 6 & Luke 11). Do we set aside time daily to pray, or only pray when we need help? Is God our personal Heavenly Father? Is His Will our concern or just our own? Forgiveness of sins and a forgiving spirit must be as much prayed for as our own personal needs. Our prayer must be made in the name of Jesus Christ - starting and ending with the adoration and trust of the Triune God.

Hymn 86 is based on Psalm 86, teaching us how to pray like King David of old.

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| 1. To my humble prayer
Lord, give ear and hear;
Save Thy servant,
Be my helper,
Be alone my hope,
And Saviour;
By thy livening rays,
Lift my soul this day. | 2. Lord, my sin forgive,
Bless and bid me live;
Grant to me
From mercy’s treasure
All Thy kindness
Without measure;
Saviour over all,
Be my All-in-all! | 3. Take self-will away
Help me to obey;
Heavenly Teacher,
By Thy kindness
Light my dullness,
Guide my blindness;
That my steps may tread
Where Thy Word shall lead. |
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EDT Bible/College Class Take Home Sheet

This sheet is given to remind you of the lesson and to encourage you to read your Bible.

Unselfish Concern: Nehemiah Desires Restoration.

- **Bad News!** The earlier restoration work led by Ezra 457BC was now in ruins.
 - **Jerusalem in ruins:** In 536BC Persian King Cyrus had allowed Jewish captives to return to Jerusalem to rebuild it. In 457BC Ezra returned to oversee the rebuilding work. But it was still in ruins in 444BC during King Artaxerxes reign.
 - **Jerusalem’s God mocked:** The enemy nations around enjoyed belittling God.

• **Who Cared? Nehemiah Did!**

Nehemiah was a Jew born in captivity. He had never been to Jerusalem and worked hard as the trusted cupbearer for the Persian King, Artaxerxes. **Yet on hearing the news he:**

- **Was broken hearted:** He could neither eat nor sleep. He truly loved the Lord God and any set back to His God’s work affected him, desiring to do anything to help.

A true believer desires to work for the Lord and is upset when God is dishonoured.

- **Made earnest prayer:** No cold, recited prayer would do; tears, fasting and total confidence that His God would hear and answer regarding Jerusalem’s plight.

A true believer trusts God will hear and answer their unselfish prayers for His glory

- **Acted bravely when God answered his prayer:** Being sad in the kings’ presence was punishable by death, but Nehemiah was so grieved that he could not pretend happiness. Challenged by the King about his sadness, Nehemiah sent up an emergency prayer to his God and then explained to the king. The kindness of his God caused King Artaxerxes to send Nehemiah to Jerusalem to restore it!

A true believer praises God and acts when the Lord overrules as He answers prayer.

- **He worked hard:** With unceasing labour Nehemiah and the faithful remnant (Priests, rulers, jewellers), set their hands to the work despite much opposition.

A true believer will gladly serve the Lord no matter how challenging the conditions.

• **Why were Nehemiah’s prayers so blessed and answered?**

- **Nehemiah was different.** His heart was for the Lord. He remained faithful to his God, even in a rich, foreign court, whilst holding a powerful and prominent position.

Challenge - Wherever we are, whatever we face - will we remain faithful to God?

- **Nehemiah really prayed and trusted.** Nehemiah knew He was praying to a great, and merciful God Who willingly hears the sincere prayers of a repentant sinner. Nehemiah first trusted God for forgiveness and then asked for His help with full knowledge that God was a sympathetically gracious hearer and answerer of prayer.

Challenge - Do we fully trust that the God we are praying to is real and all powerful?

God hears and answers the prayers of those who truly repent of their sins and are trusting only in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Our first prayer must be, “Forgive me Lord”

Do we pray with humility and great trust like David did in Psalm 86? ‘Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy. ... Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto Thee daily ... For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou wilt answer me.’ vs 1,3,5,6,7