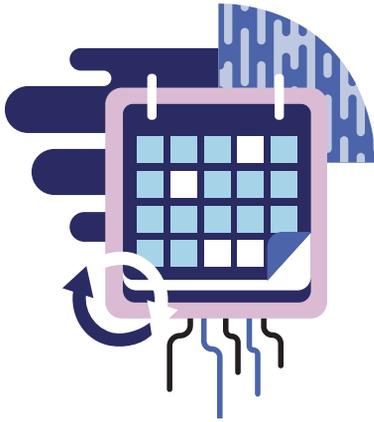


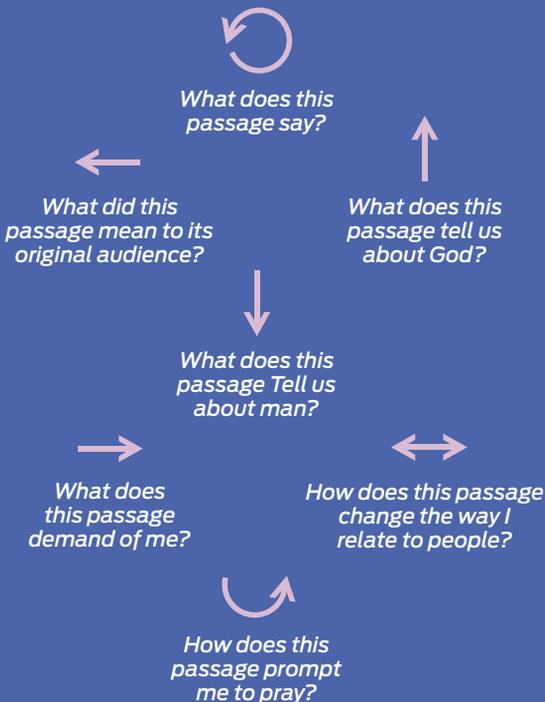
Daily Devotions



Day 1

Nehemiah 1:1-11

The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Twice Nehemiah asked the Lord to be attentive to his prayer (vv. 6,11). He was desperate for the Lord's help with the burden on his heart and also on behalf of his suffering people. Yet he grounded these calls for attention not in Himself, but rather in who God is (v. 5).

First, the Lord is the God of the heavens. He is the transcendent Creator over all that He has made. Second, the Lord is the great and awe-inspiring God who keeps His covenant with His people.

In light of who God is, Nehemiah confessed the sins of his people in hope that the Lord would restore them. Furthermore, he based that hope for restoration on the Lord's own words in the Law of Moses (Deut. 30:1-5). Finally, he asked for blessing and success as he was about to act on the God-given burden weighing down his heart.

All of Nehemiah's petitions were shaped by his first confession about his good and sovereign God. Adoration of the Lord fuels the faith we express in our prayers to Him.

How are you cultivating a growing view of God as your Father in heaven?

Nehemiah 2:1-20

Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 acknowledged the powerful hand of God in redeeming His people out of slavery in Egypt (1:10). In chapter 2, Nehemiah recognizes that God's hand was on him as he spoke to the king regarding his plans for rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem (2:8). The Lord's powerful hand was gracious in steering the heart of the king to be favorable toward Nehemiah and his bold requests. Later, Nehemiah's testimony of God's gracious hand served to strengthen the hands of the people for their work of rebuilding Jerusalem (2:18).

The need for strength presupposes the presence of weakness. In our human value systems, we consider personal weakness to be unbecoming and offensive. Yet weakness is only a liability if we hide it and don't go to God for strength. The picture throughout Scripture is that God generously and graciously gives strength to those who come to Him in faith. The Lord strengthens those who come to Him not for personal power but for grace (Rom. 16:25-27).

Where in your life do you currently need the grace-filled hand of God to strengthen you?

Nehemiah 3:1–4:23

In Nehemiah 4:4-5, we see Nehemiah's honesty when praying to God in the midst of opposition. The task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem didn't take place in a field of roses but on a rugged hilltop where threats and opposition were regular and increasing. Nehemiah's first response was to pray to the Lord, and he asked for vengeance and judgment. He prayed to God for the exile of his enemies from the promised land. No withholding. No sugarcoating. He honestly laid his heart and emotions before God.

God is not intimidated by our emotions or prayers, and when we withhold these parts of our hearts from the Lord, we actually keep ourselves from intimacy with the Lord. Nehemiah trusted the Lord for their vindication, and so did Jesus (1 Pet. 2:23), but where Nehemiah prayed for judgment, Jesus prayed for forgiveness (Luke 23:34). Let us be honest with the Lord in prayer, and let us also seek to have the mindset of our Savior in prayer.

What parts of your heart do you withhold from God in prayer?

Nehemiah 5:1-19

This passage shows that while the work on the walls was progressing, it was taking a severe toll on the people. The difficult situation was exacerbated by social injustice among the people of God. Leaders of the people were taking financial advantage of the workers and inhabitants of Jerusalem. The outcry didn't escape Nehemiah's ears and he confronted them, pointing out the hypocrisy and wickedness of their actions. He indicted them for their lack of fear of God as he stood up for those who were oppressed by them.

Nehemiah's confrontation led to repentance and celebration, but before he acted on what he was hearing, he considered carefully the course of his actions. We would be wise to follow the pathway he created when surrounded by prevailing and pervasive injustice. We should weep with those who weep and seek the Lord's direction for how to confront evil and bring the light of the gospel and God's justice to the dark places in the world.

In what areas of your community are people crying out for justice from their oppression?

Nehemiah 6:1–7:73

Not everyone is ecstatic about the work of God being accomplished in the world. In fact, many will try to frustrate His plans, but no one can stand in His way (Job 42:2; Isa. 14:24-27). He is the sovereign God; He is the covenant-keeping God. No one can stop Him from fulfilling His promises and plans.

On numerous occasions, Nehemiah's enemies tried to intimidate him to keep him from his work of leading the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They planned harm against him; they lied about him; they tried to deceive him. But each attempt failed because Nehemiah relied on the Lord for strength and wisdom. Attempts at intimidation even came after the walls had been completed.

When enemies try to frustrate the work of the gospel in your community, what will your response be? The temptation will be to fight back in your own strength, but as Nehemiah prayed, the next step should always be toward the Lord for His strength and wisdom. Our plans may fail, but God's never do; so seek His kingdom and trust Him to fulfill His plans in the face of opposition and intimidation. The Lord always accomplishes what He sets out to do.

How do you need to trust God's sovereign power as you share the gospel in the world?