

40 Days OF PRAYER

SESSION ONE

Don't Just Do Something - Sit There

INTRODUCTIONS

If this is a new group or if there are new people in your group, go around and introduce yourselves by answering the following questions:

- What is your name?
- How long have you been coming to Bayside?
- Have you been a part of a small group before?
- Tell us about your family.
- Share briefly about something fun you've done in the past three months.

OPENING

1. What do you want to see happen in your life as a result of participating in this 40 Days of Prayer Small Group?
2. If a friend asked you these questions, how would you answer?
What is prayer? What happens when you pray? Why do you pray?

MEMORY VERSE

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

BIBLE STUDY **Read Nehemiah chapter 1**

BACKGROUND

The nation of Israel had turned from God, ignoring God's commands and worshiping idols. For generations, God warned His people through prophets and called them to repent and turn back to Him. Finally, God enacted the punishments that He had originally established with Moses hundreds of years earlier. In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, after a year long siege, breached the walls of Jerusalem. The city was razed and all but a small handful of survivors were sent into exile in other parts of Babylonia. The best and brightest of the exiles were chosen and trained to go into government service (Daniel being the most notable example). Over time, the Jewish people became integrated into the life of Babylonia. However, because of the teachings of the prophets, they recognized their exile was not because God had failed them but they had failed God. As a result, their faith, rather than being crushed, began to revive.

Eventually the Babylonian Empire surrendered to the Persian Empire. The Persian king allowed some of the exiles to return to Jerusalem. However, at the protest of Jerusalem's neighbors who enjoyed their power and feared the return of the Jews, the king stopped the exiles from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (see Ezra).

Now, about 140 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Nehemiah is hearing a report on the conditions faced by those who returned to Jerusalem.

1. From this chapter, what do you know about Nehemiah? As a group, try to create as full a description of him as possible. Describe his position, character, beliefs, habits, etc.

2. What is the problem? How does Nehemiah react to it? Why do you suppose Nehemiah sees this as a problem and why does he react in these ways?

3. Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Exodus 19:3-7. What insights do these verses offer regarding Nehemiah's beliefs and the reasons for the way he reacted to the news about Jerusalem?

4. Look again at Nehemiah's prayer in verses 5-11. If you were to use Nehemiah's prayer as a pattern for your own prayer, what would the pattern be?

5. What is the importance of each part of this prayer? Why does Nehemiah include it?

6. What parts of this prayer are most like your own prayers and which parts are not?

7. Read 1 Kings 8:46-53. These verses are a part of a prayer King Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple (which was later destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar). What insight does this passage give to help us understand what Nehemiah is doing in his own prayer? Do you think Nehemiah was aware of Solomon's prayer and if so, how?

Read Nehemiah 2:1-9

BACKGROUND

Nehemiah 2 occurs four months after Nehemiah 1. Although Nehemiah is an important and trusted servant of the king, he only serves in that capacity as long as the king is pleased with him. He does not have the authority or permission to speak out of turn, or make requests of the king without the king's prior permission.

8. What risk is Nehemiah taking by making his request?

9. What prepared Nehemiah so that he was ready with his request and was courageous enough to make it?

10. What does this teach us about what happens when we pray?

11. What can we learn about Nehemiah's prayer practices and habits from verse 2:4? What kind of prayer do you think this was? How often do you pray in this way?

12. Nehemiah's response to the king was very specific. Although this was not a prayer, it was a request inspired by prayer. Do we dare be that specific in our prayers to God? Why or why not?

Practice

1. Summarize what you have learned during this session about prayer?
 - What should be included in our prayers and why?
 - How often do we pray?
 - What happens in us when we pray?
 - What role does Scripture play in our prayers?

2. After looking at your summary, did you have any new discoveries about prayer?

3. From the summary, what would you like to improve upon in your prayer life?

4. The best way to learn about prayer and grow in prayer is to pray. The best way to find support and encouragement in praying is to make a commitment to this Small group for the next six weeks. On the last page is a small group covenant. Take a look at it now and make the commitment to prayer and this small group.

5. In the Daily Devotional Guide, you are encouraged to use the “4 C’s” to reflect on the scripture passage each day. From your study in this session, share your answer to any one of the “4 C’s”
- What can you CELEBRATE?
 - What will you COMMIT to?
 - What do you need to CONFESS?
 - What will you COMMUNICATE to someone else?

PRAYER

Since this is the 40 Days of Prayer obviously prayer will be an important part of what we will do during our small group time.

Some of you may be hesitant to pray out loud. Don't worry, you will never have to pray out loud if you are not comfortable doing so. However, we encourage you at some point during this study to at least risk praying out loud once . When you pray out loud, God can use your prayers to bless others and encourage them to pray for things that God wants them to pray for, things they may not have thought of until your prayer triggered it in their mind.

For prayer today, your leader will guide you in prayer using the pattern of Nehemiah. You will begin with praise, move to confession (done silently), and then to a time of making requests. As you pray, your leader will instruct you on what to do.



Written by Phil Sommerville

Small Group Guidelines & Agreement

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines during Session One in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group. If the idea of a written agreement is unfamiliar to your group, we encourage you to give it a try.

WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

Prayer	To pray daily (we encourage you to use the 40 Days of Prayer Daily Devotions book to help you with this commitment)
Group Attendance	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
Safe Environment	To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
Be Confidential	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
Spiritual Health	To give group members permission to help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God
Welcome Newcomers	To invite our friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
Building Relationships	To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly
Other	<hr/>