**3**

**Answered Prayer**

***Nehemiah***

**Nehemiah 1:1-2:8**

At some point in their lives many Christians are tempted to

ask God “Why aren’t my prayers answered?” Though when we do so we may actually mean “Why aren’t they answered in the way that I want?” However he answers, he always answers in accordance with his will. Sometimes God answers “no”, and

the Bible gives some reasons why. Frequently he answers “yes”, but not instantly. And at other times God may first need us to be prepared to be part of the answer before he will respond to our prayers.

**GROUP DISCUSSION.** How does what you feel about something or someone affect the way you pray?

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**PERSONAL REFLECTION.**In what ways have your

feelings for someone encouraged or discouraged you in your prayer for them?

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Jerusalem, the location of the temple of God, was to the

Old Testament believer the center of their devotion (as it is

for Jews today). Nehemiah, a Jew in exile, was a senior

official in the Persian royal court, strategically placed to be

 part of the answer to his prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. *Read Nehemiah 1:1-2-8*

***17 Answered Prayer***

1. Based on what you know from the passage, how did Nehemiah’s concerns and motives affect what and how he prayed?

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2.The news that Nehemiah heard in 1:2-3 drove him to definite action (see 1:4). What sort of news would drive you to pray with the same urgency?

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3.Look carefully at the lengths of time (1:1; 2:1) over which Nehemiah prayed. Why might Nehemiah have had to (or wanted to) pray for a long time about the issues that concerned him?

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4.Nehemiah 1:5 shows us the first stage of Nehemiah’s prayer. How can focusing on God at the beginning of our prayers enable us to pray with more confidence?

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5.Nehemiah’s prayer then moves into repentance (1:6-7) when he not only confesses his own sin but also his people’s wrongdoing. Why, when praying about Jerusalem, might he have felt the need to repent personally as well as identify with the sin of others?

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***Prayer 18***

6. Nehemiah referred to God’s promises and previous dealings with the children of Israel (1:8-10) as part of his prayer. In what ways do your knowledge of God’s actions and character affect the way you pray?

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7.Nehemiah 1:11 and 2:4 give us an understanding of how Nehemiah saw God in control of the circumstances he faced. How does our understanding of God’s sovereignty affect the way we pray for situations?

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8.In 1:11-2:8 we see Nehemiah taking steps to tackle the problem of Jerusalem’s walls being broken down (1:3). In light of the enormous human and practical odds Nehemiah was up against, what do you think gave him confidence to embark on the task God had given him to do?

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9.Nehemiah’s fear in 2:2 indicates the risks he was taking in approaching the king on this issue. Why do you think Nehemiah was allowed to speak and ask for help?

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10. What does Nehemiah’s request show us about his thinking and prayer prior to his audience with the king?

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***19 Answered Prayer***

11. How can Nehemiah’s example help your prayer life?

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*Ask God to help you focus afresh on what he has revealed of himself in the Bible and to help you to use that understanding when you pray.*

**Now or Later**

Try writing down what you usually pray for each day, and think of any practical ways in which you might be part of the answer to your prayers.