

Getting Unstuck in Your Prayer Life

By Dana Olson

Feeling stuck in your prayer life? Same old, same old? Wishing you could break free?

Praying God's Word—praying Scripture—is the key to overcoming arrested prayer development. God's Word is full of riches to enable you to pray with greater depth, insight, hope, confidence, and joy. Here's an idea: pray with echoes of Nehemiah's prayer (Neh. 1:4–11).

Stuck Away from Home

Nehemiah is a man far from home. Talk about being stuck! He's a slave in the court of a foreign king, yearning for news from his homeland, just one of the Jewish exile captives.

When he hears a report from home regarding the trouble and disgrace facing the tiny remnant who remain in Jerusalem, including the city's broken-down walls and destroyed gates, Nehemiah is moved with great emotion and responds with this realization: only God can bring breakthrough. Only God! So, Nehemiah begins to fast and pray. After all:

- the people back home are defeated and broken
- the city wall is worthless and no longer offers any protection
- Nehemiah is a man far from home and under obligation as cupbearer to an unbelieving king
- there is strong opposition in the region to rebuilding Jerusalem
- Nehemiah has no resources available to rebuild the wall.

Insurmountable obstacles. All seems lost. Yet, God is able.

While obstacles are inevitable, Scripture is full of examples where God bears His mighty arm and pours grace into such situations. Obstacles are the occasion for our Mighty God to work!

Listen In

Nehemiah's outpouring of prayer is recorded for our benefit.

- He begins by recognizing God's greatness, awesome power, and covenant-keeping steadfast love.
- He repents by confessing his own sin, as well as the sin of his family and nation. He pulls no punches.
- Nehemiah recalls God's past promises of redemption and faithfulness and love.
- And he humbly but boldly requests success in undertaking this "impossible" project.

God hears and answers his cries! Feast with joy on chapter 2 as well as 6:15–16:

So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

These two verses record something astounding. Not only is the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem accomplished in record speed (52 days!), but even the enemies who opposed the work knew in their hearts this key fact: only God could have done it. "We know them. There's no way they could do this on their own. They must have the true and living God on their side! This has been accomplished with the help of their God."

Who is like our God? He overcomes the obstacles. So much so

that even the enemy is left shaking in their boots.

Nehemiah-Like Prayers

What are your challenging circumstances? What about the great troubles of our nation and world? You can pray with Nehemiah:

- Begin with a burst of praise and adoration, for our God is merciful, powerful, and able to do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20).
- Confess your own sin as well as the sins of the church and our nation. Licentiousness and rebellion are headlines of our news feed every day.
- Express to God your hope in Christ based on all the remarkable promises of Scripture. He has promised, and He is faithful!
- Tell God, humbly but boldly, what your heart desires. Describe in prayer the Kingdom success that would bless you and make a difference in our needy world.

Then step forward! Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and rolled up his sleeves. He prayed, then took action. The results left Israel’s enemies breathless—and still amaze us to this day. Only God could have done it! God did. How does God want you to enter into the answer to your prayers?

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