

**Nehemiah: Nehemiah's Request**  
Nehemiah 2:1-8

**MAIN POINT: Prayer is not a substitute for action, it is an action for which there is no substitute.**

**Introduction:**

Ask as many group members as possible to respond to these questions:

- **How do you and your family handle gift-giving for birthdays and holidays:**
  - **We drop subtle hints about what we would like for gifts.**
  - **We each submit a “wish list” so everyone knows what to buy.**
  - **We don't talk about what we want; that would be in bad taste.**
  - **We just give cash or gift cards; it's easier all around.**
  - **Other: \_\_\_\_\_**
  
- **How do you approach God when making a request?**
  - **Confidently**
  - **Hesitantly**
  - **Matter-of-factly**
  - **Fearfully**
  - **Other: \_\_\_\_\_**
  
- **What is your basis for asking God for things in the way that you do? That is, what is there about your understanding of God and prayer that leads you to make requests?**
  
- **What percentage of your prayer life would you say comprises requests for God to give you something or do something for you? What does that tell you about your relationship with God?**

**Persistence in Prayer**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 2:1-5, then ask the group to respond to these questions:

- **Pastor Andy pointed out that it was four months from the time Nehemiah heard the bad news about Jerusalem and Nehemiah's conversation with King Artaxerxes in this passage. What had Nehemiah been doing for those four months?**
  
- **How does Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 18:1-8 reflect Nehemiah's experience?**
  
- **How have you experienced persistence in prayer? What was the outcome—or are you still praying?**

**Planning and Prayer**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 2:6-8, and then ask the group to respond to these discussion questions:

- **When King Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah about some details of his planned trip to Jerusalem, Nehemiah made some additional requests. What does this tell you he had**

been doing in addition to praying?

- **How do you feel about praying + planning? How does that reflect on the role of faith in prayer?**
- **What are some examples of prayer, faith, and planning from your own experience?**

### **Partners and Prayer**

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 2:9, and then ask the group to respond to these discussion questions:

- **What did King Artaxerxes do to support and enable Nehemiah's call and mission to Jerusalem? What does this tell you about the people and resources God taps to respond to our prayer requests?**
- **What is your opinion about Christians partnering with non-Christians for the sake some ministry goal? Where would you draw the line at cooperating with some other organization—or would you not draw any lines?**
- **Pastor Andy noted that King Artaxerxes was generous in granting Nehemiah's requests, but Nehemiah credits God's favor for the positive outcome. How do you make sense of that? What are some examples that in your own experience?**
- **Pastor Andy shared how God is teaching our board and church about the importance of prayer. What examples from our church family would you add to Andy's list?**

**Prayer:** How can you make your needs known to your King? Do this as a group, then close the group session by reading aloud this prayer from our Sunday worship service:

**O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**