

Teach Us to Pray – Nehemiah June 15 | Group Guide

Introduce this new sermon series and ask a few reflection questions (15 minutes).

When the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray,” they were seeking to emulate the words of our greatest Teacher and find a deeper connection with God the Father. Today, we’re asking the same. In this six-week series, we’ll echo that ancient request and allow God Himself to be our guide. Teach Us to Pray explores six powerful prayers from the Old Testament - prayers from real people in real need. Their cries for help varied from forgiveness to healing to blessing to deliverance, but each of them reveals a rich, honest, and dynamic connectivity to God. Together, we’ll learn not only how to pray, but how to live in ongoing, transformative relationship with the One who hears.

To that end, we’re going to look at several Old Testament examples of prayer. This week, we begin with Nehemiah as he returns from exile and sees the walls and city of Jerusalem in ruins.

- What is prayer to you?
- In his sermon, Dan said, “Almost every Christian I have ever met wants to have a better prayer life. They want a deeper prayer life. A more powerful prayer life. A more consistent prayer life.” In the spirit of those statements, how would you fill in the following sentence, “I want a more _____ prayer life.” Explain.
- What’s keeping you from realizing that kind of prayer life?

Read Nehemiah 1:1-11 and discuss the sermon (25 minutes).

- In this text, and as highlighted by Dan, Nehemiah shows great concern and great compassion for Jerusalem and its people. He said, “The true engine of intercessory prayer is a heart of resilient love. When you have deep concern for others, you will go to God on behalf of others!” In this current season, is your heart oriented more inwards or outwards? Why?
- How often do you feel that your personal concerns in prayer align with God’s concerns for what He’s doing in the world? Explain.
- Read **Nehemiah 1:6-7** again. In looking at Nehemiah’s life and prayer, he also displays personal responsibility for the need that exists in his world. He even confesses! Are there any concerns that you are desiring to take to God that you either need to express personal responsibility for or need to confess because of complicity in the problem at hand?

- Now re-read Nehemiah 1:8-9. In his sermon, Dan called for us to follow in Nehemiah's footsteps and to "Call upon God's faithfulness" in our prayers! What are some specific promises of God you need to hold onto and bring before God in your prayer life in this season? Explain.
- The last point of Dan's sermon centered on the idea of "Personal Engagement." What needs do you see in our community or in the 317 that you want to begin taking to God in prayer? To be personally engaged in? How might prayer provide fuel for that engagement?

Spend time as smaller groups prayer walking together (30 minutes).

1. Prepare

As with Nehemiah, let's bring our concerns before God. Maybe there are already burdens on your heart for our city and community, but maybe you aren't quite sure of what those burdens are yet. Regardless, this week we are encouraging each of our groups to get outside (weather permitting) and split up into groups of 2-3 prayer walking around whatever neighborhood you find yourself in. Feel free to adapt where you walk to the specifics of where you're meeting. Below you'll find instructions and prompts for prayer.

Instruct your group to make a plan of where to walk, for how long, and who is going with who. Review the rest of the steps in order to ensure that everyone knows what they are doing. The goal isn't necessarily to pray the same words as Nehemiah, rather, the goal is to begin to pray with the same heart as Nehemiah.

As you begin, humble yourself before God. He goes before you. Ask God to lead you. Trust His guidance. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "The Lord looks out over the whole earth. He gives strength to those who commit their lives completely to him."

2. Scripture

Read the verse below to orient your smaller group as you walk your neighborhood.

- Matthew 5:14-16 NIV: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

3. Pray

Ask God to help you see your neighborhood the way he does.

- Burdens – Pray for any specific burdens you feel for our community and for our city.
- Needs - Pray for those who are lonely, sick, or elderly. Pray for those experiencing depression, fear and anxiety, anger, or grief. Pray for those struggling with their finances, those who are stressed. For those in broken relationships. For those who have recently moved/immigrated from another culture and find themselves adapting to a new place.
- People – Pray for the elderly, first responders, health care workers, single parents, community leaders, immigrants, unemployed, educators, those with special needs and their families. If you pass someone you might be bold enough to ask if there is something they would like prayer for and possibly pray with them right then.
- Spiritual - Pray for those far from God to seek Him, see His love, desire to hear about God, to cast their anxieties on Him. Pray they would put their hope and trust in God. Pray for Christians to trust God, pray more, read the Bible, share their hope, to serve others, to worship God, and to be generous.

Come back together as a large group and debrief your prayer walk (10 minutes).

- How was the prayer walk for you? What did you pray for?
- How did engaging in this experience help you live with a heart like Nehemiah's?
- What are you taking away from this experience? What?

Finish by having someone pray over your whole group.