

Nehemiah (God is Faithful)

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Nehemiah 1:1-4

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

- Nehemiah **wept and mourned** because it had been almost 100 years after Israel was first taken captive by the Babylonians and some 150 years after the city of Jerusalem was destroyed.

Matthew 9:36-38

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

- **Fasting and prayer** are usually linked and are ways to demonstrate to God, and to ourselves, that we are serious about our relationship with Him.
 - Fasting in Scripture is, almost always, abstaining from food for an extended period. Cf. Matthew 4:1-4; 6:16-18; Acts 14:23
 - Prayer is “talking to God.” Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is direct address to God and from God. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Romans 8:26-28; James 1:6; 4:3, 13-15; 5:15; 1 John 5:13-16

2 Timothy 2:13 *if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.*

Discipleship Homework:

Consider **fasting** and **praying** to grow your faith and understand God's heart for the mission.

Here are some Scriptural examples of fasting:

- Regular Fast - 2 Chronicles 20; regular fast is done by abstaining from all food, both solid and liquid, except for water; Jesus did this in Matthew 4.
- Partial Fast - Daniel 10; spent 3 weeks fasting from certain foods (whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and seeds).
- Absolute/Total Fast - Esther 4; when she found the plans for the Jews to be killed in Persia, she and the other Jews fasted from food and water for 3 days, before entering the king's court to ask for mercy. Moses did this for 40 days on Mt. Sinai, which was a miracle (Deut. 9:9); Elijah also when he fled for his life in wilderness (1 Kings 19).

Here are some Scriptural examples from Paul's prayers you can pray:

Romans 15:5-6, 13, 30-33; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Ephesians 1:3-23; 3:14-21; 6:18-20; Philippians 1:3-11; Colossians 1:3-14; 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2:13-16; 3:9-13; 5:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 16-17; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:3-7; Philemon 4-7