

## **Pray Before You Build - Nehemiah 1:5–11**

View sermon here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhDIOxvDIIQ>

“One of the great temptations of life is to move quickly from seeing a problem to trying to solve it. We need to spend more time recognizing the pain of the problem and praying.”

Nehemiah spends four months praying before he approaches the king.

- Why do we tend to move quickly from recognizing a problem to trying to fix it?
- Is there something in your life right now where you need to pray and wait rather than immediately act?

Nehemiah continues doing his daily work while he prays. “Prayer isn’t something Nehemiah does instead of living his life — prayer is how Nehemiah lives his life.”

- What are some practical ways prayer can become part of our day?
- Why is waiting sometimes an important part of faithful prayer?

Nehemiah begins his prayer by focusing on who God is—the God of heaven, the God who keeps covenant, the God who redeems.

“If God is small in our minds and hearts, our prayers tend to become small.”

- What does Nehemiah’s description of God remind us about God’s character?
- What are some “big prayers” that we might be hesitant to pray?

The sermon challenges us to pray for our families, communities, leaders, people experiencing violence and war, those with little power, and people who have never heard the good news of Jesus.

- How might praying for those needs change the way we see our own role?

Nehemiah does not distance himself from the failures of his people. He confesses, “We have sinned.” “Nehemiah understands that before he asks God to rebuild the walls, he needs to ask God to rebuild the people.”

- Why can it be difficult to pray “we” prayers rather than “they” prayers?
- How does remembering that God is faithful change the way we approach our failures?

God begins to change Nehemiah. "Prayer is helping him see the situation through God's eyes. Prayer is moving him from despair toward hope."

- How can prayer move us from simply asking God to do something to asking God how we might participate?

The sermon ends with this challenge:

"Like Nehemiah, it begins when we see what God sees, care about what God cares about, and dare to pray prayers that are bigger than ourselves."

Closing questions:

What are we praying for that is bigger than us?

As we pray that prayer, where might God be inviting us to become part of the answer?