

"As the West secularized, the locus points of authority moved from God, Scripture and the church to the Enlightenment-based triad of science, research, and the university. The new seat of secular authority then redefined what can be known (things like mathematics and biology and not things like right, wrong and God). In doing so, it conveniently moved subjects like religion and ethics into the domain of belief, by which most people mean opinion, feeling or just wishful thinking." – John Mark Comer

travailing prayer = burdened, focused, crying out to God

Nehemiah 1:1-3

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."



- For 23 years the prophet, Jeremiah, had been delivering God's word
- For 23 years the response has been consistent – "Jeremiah, you've gone off the spiritual deep-end, leave us alone, let us live the way we want to live, we're fine."
- So, in 586BC, the Babylonians invaded the southern kingdom of Judah, captured and deported 10,000 Israelite leaders to modern-day Iraq.
- This is called "the exile."
(they remain in Babylon for 70 years)

Nehemiah 1:4

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

➤ God-centered

Nehemiah 1:5-6

Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night.."

Nehemiah knows who he is talking to and that shapes what he is talking about.

No matter how broken the wall, no matter how burned the gates, no matter how discouraged the people...God, you and you alone, can help us get through what we are going through.



➤ **Honest about current reality**

Nehemiah 1:6-7

6...I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.



Hebrides Revival in Scotland (1949-1953)

Peggy & Christine Smith (the praying sisters)

Duncan Campbell, evangelist & preacher, was invited to come speak for 10 days in 1949... He ended up staying for 3 years!

"Let us be honest in the presence of our God and get right into the grips of reality. Have I a vision of our desperate need? O for a baptism of honesty—for a gripping reality that will move us!"

- Duncan Campbell

➤ **Shaped by Scripture**

Nehemiah 1:8-9

8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

God's word → God's character → God's perspective → Guides how/what to pray

Nehemiah's hope is rooted in the character & promises of God, not the circumstances of man.