

Growth Group Study - Breakthrough Prayers - Nehemiah

Bible Readings - Nehemiah 1:1–2:5

17 February 2019 - John Malcolm

Do you ever get the sense things are out of balance, maybe a bit weird in our world and nothing seems to be normal anymore?

What do you see in relationships between nations, political wrangling, changes in acceptable standards, weather patterns or loss of bio-diversity which might indicate “normal” has changed?

John suggested the growing antagonistic divide, seen between Republicans and Democrats in the USA or between Leavers and Remainers in the United Kingdom is not just healthy disagreement but points to deep division and disunity. What is your view? (Read Luke 11.17)

Recent news has highlighted the power of *Influencers* in social media. Name some people/groups who are working to define what normal should be in our world today?

How do these trends impact our lives in New Zealand?

John suggested human life has never really been normal since Adam and Eve fell in the garden of Eden. If that is the case how would we know what normal truly is?

Read Nehemiah 1.1-4

Why do you think a godly man like Nehemiah stayed in Susa when other Jews had returned from exile to live in Jerusalem?

Why did he find the news from his brother so distressing?

Read Jeremiah 29.4-7 & Psalm 137.1-6

John mentioned a link between Esther, Daniel and Nehemiah was that they were all living in exile.

Comparing the readings above, what was the tension they lived with?

How had “normal” changed in their day that led them to pray breakthrough prayers?

Read Nehemiah 2.10, 4.2 & 1 Samuel 17.45-47

Why do you think Sanballat and Tobiah were unhappy when Nehemiah finally arrived Jerusalem?

What does their attitude towards their Jewish neighbours reveal about the chances of Jerusalem's future being changed without divine intervention?

What were they overlooking when they mocked Nehemiah and his people as *feeble Jews*?

Brother Andrew once said, *One man with God is a majority*. What do you think he meant when he said this and how did such confidence empower David?

Read Nehemiah 1.5-10, Deuteronomy 30.1-4 & Romans 8.32

What are the key elements of Nehemiah's prayer and why were they important?

What do you think he is trying to achieve by reminding God of what He had said through Moses in Deut 30-1-4?

Why is it helpful to remember who God is when we go into his presence in prayer?

Read Nehemiah 1.11

What does this reveal to us about Nehemiah and why is this important to the story?

How has prayer helped Nehemiah gain perspective about where true power lies?

Why do you think Nehemiah refers to king Artaxerxes as "that man"?

How might praying change our perspective on the situations we face?

Read Nehemiah 2.4-6

John spoke about *arrow* prayers sent quickly and swiftly to God, prayed in a heartbeat, an intake of breath, a momentary pause.

Have you had any experience of *arrow* prayers? If so share this with the group.

Why are *arrow* prayers good at times, but not sufficient for building a strong relationship with God?

What do you think is the right balance between regular times of prayer and quick *arrow* prayers?

How is Nehemiah's prayer answered?

What spiritual breakthroughs do we need at Greyfriars?

What part might prayer play in achieving the breakthroughs we are seeking?

If, from the perspective of the bible "normal" is when God's will is done, how might we pray to return life to normal?

For reflection:

How might I develop a stronger prayer life?

Take time to write a prayer for a breakthrough in your life.

Resources

How did normal get so weird <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p06zqylg>

The war for normal <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00026y5>