

Victoria Fellowship Church

International & Interdenominational

Bible Study Worksheet – April 26, 2020

Theme: Nehemiah: A Vessel of Restoration

Topic: Pray and Act

Main Text: Nehemiah 2:1-20

Key verse: Nehemiah 2:4-5 *Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."* (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: King Artaxerxes Longimanus was a gentle and noble king. But he was also a ruthless one. He had his brother killed to ascend the throne. He also personally killed his military commander when that one threatened his rule. So, one can understand why Nehemiah prayed for favour before this man (Nehemiah 1:11). But it was not until about four months later that the opportunity presented itself, when the king saw his countenance and asked, *"Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill..."* (Nehemiah 2:2). Although, this same king had permitted Ezra and some of the priests and Levites to return to Judah to reestablish the worship of God, Nehemiah had no way of knowing how his desire to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem would be received by the king. And so, he was afraid. But knowing that this was the moment he had been praying for, with his heart in his mouth, he told the king what was on his heart.

1. **(a) Nehemiah prayed all manner of prayers at different times. Let participants read Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2:4; 4:4-5,9; 6:9; 13:29 and identify the occasion and nature of prayer he prayed. (b) When we find ourselves in similar situations, how does our response compare with Nehemiah's? (c) What can we learn from him concerning the place of prayer in confronting challenges?**

Although king Artaxerxes had permitted Ezra to return to Jerusalem to reestablish the worship of God, Nehemiah could not presume similar approval for the rebuilding of the walls. Walls signified autonomy and strength; explaining why Tobiah and his cohorts were quick to accuse Nehemiah of plotting a rebellion (Nehemiah 2:19). And no wonder Nehemiah was afraid when the king asked to know his concern. So, while Nehemiah waited, he was busy formulating a plan and getting ready for the right opportunity. So, when the opportunity presented itself (Nehemiah 2:4), he was ready; from the travel permits he will need through all the different countries he will be travelling, to the materials he will need for the work; even to estimating the duration of his leave of absence!

2. **(a) What can we learn from Nehemiah's boldness in asking for permission to continue a project the king's predecessor had stopped? (b) How did Nehemiah combine his faith in God and his organizational and management skills at this stage of his pursuit of the vision God has given him? (c) How does his approach compare with that of Ezra (Ezra 8:21-23 and Nehemiah 2:7-8)? Which would you prefer? Why/why not?**

Finally, Nehemiah arrived Jerusalem. Certainly, news of the arrival of this prominent official of the King of Persia must have reached the leaders of the Jews at the time. Yet, none of them bothered to approach him to find out his mission. Nehemiah on his part was not in a hurry to dive into this work that had weighed heavily on his heart for months. Instead, he took his time to rest, evaluate the situation before approaching the leaders and officials of Jews. Thereafter, he got the people together and shared his burden

3. **(a) Nehemiah was burdened by the ruined city and burnt gates. How do these pictures align with the state of the Church today? (b) In what ways do we see the 'ruined' condition of the Church affect the advance of the gospel? (c) Which aspect of the 'ruins' can we attempt to mobilize others to join us to repair? What will it take?**

Prayer: *Father thank You for Your gracious hand upon me. Use me as the person who rallies others to the rebuilding of Your church in my neighbourhood and city, in Jesus name, Amen.*