

ST. BARNABAS CHURCH, SWANLAND - SMALL GROUP NOTES

Sharing Christ through friendship

Time to rebuild – lessons from Nehemiah: (1) – Prayer.

Bible readings: Nehemiah 1; Matthew 6:5-8

Welcome/ icebreaker	What do you do when you hear bad news?
Worship	<i>Suggestions:</i> 423 O Lord hear my prayer, 440 One thing I ask, 443 Open our eyes Lord 5 What a friend we have in Jesus; 742 Great is the darkness, 755 He is the Lord.
Word (refs.↓)	
Matthew 6: 5-8	Pick out three important things Jesus say about prayer here (where, how, how long, etc). What matters (and what doesn't)? Read (perhaps together) the version of the “Lord’s prayer” that follows. Would it be better to call it “the disciples’ prayer”? Why/ why not?
Nehemiah 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If time, read Ezra 1:1-6 and then Ezra 4:7-23 (NB v.24 relates to an earlier time). • Make sure everyone is clear about this timeline: <i>Exodus (c.1220BC) - united monarchy (1050-930) - divided kingdoms (930-587) – fall of Jerusalem & exile to Babylon (587) – return (538) – Nehemiah & Artaxerxes, King of Persia (445-)</i> • v.4 What prompted Nehemiah’s mourning and fasting (see vv.2-3). To what did Nehemiah attribute the problems of v.3 (see v.8)? What was his response (v.6-7)? How should we react when we hear upsetting things about what is happening among God’s people? • What do you make of the fact that Nehemiah confessed his own and his family’s sin in regard to the failure of God’s people 130+ years before? How should we acknowledge our own responsibilities for failures among God’s people? • v.9 - Is it ever right to challenge God in prayer? What promises do you feel God has made concerning our church family today and how could we call on God to act according to them? • v.11 – Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king. In what ways has God placed you in a position of influence ‘for such a time as this’? How could you use that influence for the good of his kingdom? Are you doing so? (if not, what is stopping you?)
Witness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray – for your mission link(s) and those with needs within your group • Plan – how might you prepare for an encounter with a decision-maker in your life, as Nehemiah did. Prepare for praying ‘arrow’ prayers (2:4) by praying regular, Bible-rooted prayers. • Firm up plans for your group for an invitation event for family/ friends/ neighbours who are not yet Christians (10-18 Feb is half term).