

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: Ordinary People, Extraordinary God

Devotional

Have you ever felt like you're just an ordinary person facing extraordinary challenges? Nehemiah understood this feeling completely. He was a cupbearer - essentially a servant in a foreign king's court. Nothing about his background screamed 'world changer' or 'history maker.' Yet God used him to accomplish something remarkable: rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

What made the difference wasn't Nehemiah's credentials, connections, or capabilities. It was his extraordinary faith in an extraordinary God. While others might have relied on their own strength, political maneuvering, or human wisdom, Nehemiah chose a different path. He recognized that the God he served was bigger than any obstacle he faced.

This truth should encourage every one of us today. You don't need to be the smartest person in the room, the most talented, or the most connected. What you need is faith in a God who specializes in using ordinary people to accomplish His extraordinary purposes. Your background, your limitations, your perceived weaknesses - none of these disqualify you from being used by God.

When you feel overwhelmed by life's challenges, remember Nehemiah. Remember that God doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called. Your ordinariness is not a liability - it's an opportunity for God's power to shine through you in ways that will leave no doubt about who deserves the glory.

Bible Verse

'The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 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." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.' - Nehemiah 1:1-4

Reflection Question

What 'ordinary' qualities or circumstances in your life might God want to use for His extraordinary purposes?

Quote

Unlike the men that I've just mentioned, the reason that the man we're about to study experienced extraordinary accomplishments in his life is because he had an extraordinary faith and an extraordinary God.

Prayer

Lord, help me to see myself through Your eyes. Remind me that You don't need my perfection - You need my availability. Give me faith to believe that You can use my ordinary life for Your extraordinary purposes. Amen.

Day 2: When Your Heart Breaks

Devotional

Nehemiah's story begins with heartbreak. When he heard about Jerusalem's broken walls and his people's distress, he didn't just feel sad - he was devastated. He sat down and wept. For days, he mourned, fasted, and prayed. This wasn't a quick emotional response; it was a deep, sustained grief that moved him to action.

Sometimes we think that being a person of faith means we should always be positive and upbeat. But Nehemiah shows us something different. He shows us that it's okay to be deeply affected by the brokenness around us. In fact, it's more than okay - it's necessary. The things that break God's heart should break ours too.

What breaks your heart today? Maybe it's injustice in your community, broken relationships in your family, or struggles in your workplace. Perhaps it's global issues like poverty, persecution, or pain that seems overwhelming. Don't dismiss these feelings or try to push them away quickly. Like Nehemiah, let your heart be moved by what moves God's heart.

But here's the key: don't let your heartbreak lead to hopelessness. Let it lead you to God. Nehemiah's grief didn't paralyze him; it propelled him to prayer. When your heart breaks over the things that matter to God, you're positioned to be part of His solution. Your compassion could be the beginning of God's extraordinary work through your ordinary life.

Bible Verse

'The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 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." When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.' - Nehemiah 1:1-4

Reflection Question

What situation or need in your world breaks your heart, and how might God be calling you to respond with both grief and action?

Quote

He is a man of God who loved the word of God, who served in the royal court of a pagan king who hated the people of God. Fascinating story.

Prayer

Father, give me a heart that breaks for the things that break Yours. Help me not to become numb to the pain around me, but to let it drive me to You in prayer and action. Show me how You want to use my compassion for Your purposes. Amen.

Day 3: Begin With God

Devotional

When faced with Jerusalem's desperate situation, Nehemiah had options. He could have immediately started strategizing, networking with influential people, or developing a detailed action plan. Instead, he did something that changed everything: he began with God.

This principle is revolutionary in our action-oriented culture. We're conditioned to jump into problem-solving mode, to rely on our own wisdom and resources. But Nehemiah understood something profound - every challenge and opportunity in life should begin with God. Not as an afterthought or a backup plan, but as the starting point.

Think about the last major challenge you faced. Did you begin with God, or did you begin with Google? Did you start with prayer, or did you start with planning? There's nothing wrong with research and planning, but the order matters. When we begin with God, we invite His wisdom, His power, and His perspective into our situation from the very beginning.

Beginning with God doesn't mean being passive or irresponsible. Nehemiah would go on to develop detailed plans, organize resources, and take decisive action. But all of that flowed from his foundation of prayer and dependence on God. When we start with God, we position ourselves to see opportunities we might have missed and to receive strength we don't naturally possess.

Whatever challenge or opportunity you're facing today, follow Nehemiah's example. Before you make that call, send that email, or take that step - begin with God.

Bible Verse

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Reflection Question

In what current situation do you need to stop relying on your own understanding and begin with God instead?

Quote

He does what every one of us should do. When we face an opportunity in our lives, a challenge in our lives, it really doesn't matter where that challenge or opportunity may be. He does exactly what every one of us should do. He begins with God and he goes to God in prayer.

Prayer

Lord, forgive me for the times I've rushed ahead without seeking You first. Help me to make beginning with You my natural response to every challenge and opportunity. I want to depend on Your wisdom, not just my own. Amen.

Day 4: The Power of Worship-First Prayer

Devotional

When Nehemiah finally prayed, he didn't rush in with his requests. He began with worship, acknowledging God as 'the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of love.' This wasn't just a polite greeting - it was a deliberate choice to start with God's character rather than his own concerns.

How often do we rush into prayer with our shopping list of needs and wants? We jump straight to 'God, I need this' or 'God, please fix that.' But Nehemiah shows us a better way. When we begin with worship, we remind ourselves who God is before we tell Him what we need. We align our hearts with His greatness before we present our requests.

Worshipping first changes our perspective. It reminds us that we're talking to the Creator of the universe, not a cosmic vending machine. It helps us remember that God is sovereign, loving, and faithful - truths that should shape how we approach Him with our concerns. When we start with worship, our problems don't disappear, but they do get put in proper perspective.

This practice also changes our hearts. As we focus on God's character - His power, His love, His faithfulness - our faith grows. We begin to see our situations through the lens of His capabilities rather than our limitations. Worship-first prayer doesn't just change our requests; it changes us.

Today, before you bring your concerns to God, take time to worship Him. Acknowledge His greatness, His love, and His faithfulness. Let worship prepare your heart for the conversation that follows.

Bible Verse

'Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.' - Nehemiah 1:5-11

Reflection Question

How might beginning your prayers with worship change both your perspective on your problems and your relationship with God?

Quote

I am convicted as I study the Word of God. I am convicted as I study Nehemiah, that I need to begin with worship.

Prayer

Great and awesome God, You are sovereign over all things. You are loving, faithful, and powerful. Before I bring my requests to You, I want to worship You for who You are. Help me to always remember Your character as I approach You in prayer. Amen.

Day 5: Go Big or Go Home

Devotional

After worshipping God and confessing sin, Nehemiah made an audacious request. He asked God to give him favor with King Artaxerxes - the very king whose predecessors had destroyed Jerusalem's progress. This wasn't a safe, small prayer. This was a 'go big or go home' prayer that required enormous faith.

Nehemiah understood something we often forget: our God is a big God. He's not limited by human politics, past failures, or seemingly impossible circumstances. The apostle Paul reminds us that God 'is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.' Yet how often do we pray small, safe prayers that don't require much faith?

What would happen if we started praying prayers that could only be answered by God's intervention? What if we stopped playing it safe and started asking God for things that would clearly demonstrate His power and glory? Nehemiah's bold prayer wasn't presumptuous - it was faith-filled. He knew that if God was going to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, it would require divine favor in impossible circumstances.

Your situation might seem impossible too. Maybe you're facing a relationship that seems beyond repair, a financial crisis that feels overwhelming, or a dream that appears unreachable. Don't settle for small prayers that match your small faith. Pray big prayers that match your big God.

Remember, powerful prayer isn't just about getting what you want - it's about aligning your heart with God's purposes and trusting Him with the results. When you pray big prayers, you position yourself to see God work in ways that will strengthen your faith and bring Him glory.

Bible Verse

'Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.' - Ephesians 3:20-21

Reflection Question

What 'go big or go home' prayer has God been prompting you to pray, but you've been holding back because it seems too impossible?

Quote

This is a go big or go home prayer. Have you ever prayed that kind of prayer? Or do you stay safe?

Prayer

Father, forgive me for praying small prayers to a big God. Give me the faith to pray boldly, knowing that You are able to do immeasurably more than I can ask or imagine. Help me to trust You with the impossible. Amen.