

Summary

This sermon introduces a new series on the book of Nehemiah, focusing on how ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things through faith in God. Pastor Mike begins by sharing examples of ordinary men like Walt Disney, Milton Hershey, and Elvis Presley who overcame failures to achieve greatness. However, Nehemiah's story is different because his extraordinary accomplishments came through his extraordinary faith and relationship with God. The sermon provides historical context about the Jewish exile to Babylon and their return to rebuild Jerusalem, only to have King Artaxerxes tear down their progress. Nehemiah, serving as cupbearer to this same king, receives devastating news about Jerusalem's condition from his brother and responds with deep mourning, fasting, and prayer. The main focus is on Nehemiah's powerful prayer in chapter 1, which demonstrates three key elements: beginning with worship of God, confessing sin honestly, and making bold requests while trusting God's timing.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with grateful hearts, acknowledging that You are the Creator of all things and our loving Father. As we gather to study Your Word and learn from the life of Nehemiah, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to receive what You want to teach us today. Help us to be humble and receptive to Your Spirit's leading in our discussion. May we not just gain knowledge, but be transformed by Your truth. Prepare us to hear from You and to encourage one another as we grow in faith together. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

Share about a time when you had to wait longer than expected for something you really wanted. How did the waiting period affect you?

Key Verses

1. Nehemiah 1:4
2. Nehemiah 1:5-6
3. Nehemiah 1:8-9
4. Nehemiah 1:11

Questions

1. What stands out to you most about Nehemiah's response when he heard the bad news about Jerusalem?
2. Why do you think Nehemiah began his prayer with worship rather than immediately asking for what he needed?
3. How does Nehemiah's willingness to confess not just his own sins but the sins of his people challenge your approach to prayer?

4. What does it reveal about Nehemiah's character that he was willing to serve faithfully in the court of a king who opposed God's people?
5. Pastor Mike mentioned that sometimes we 'rush in with our list' when we pray. How can we better incorporate worship into our prayer lives?
6. Nehemiah prayed for success 'today' but God answered months later. How do you handle waiting on God's timing in your own life?
7. What 'impossible' situation in your life might God be calling you to approach through prayer like Nehemiah did?
8. How can we develop the kind of bold faith that asks God for big things while remaining humble and dependent on Him?

Life Application

This week, commit to beginning each day with worship before making any requests in prayer. Take time to acknowledge who God is and what He has done before bringing your needs and concerns to Him. Also, identify one challenging situation in your life and spend time this week praying specifically about it, asking God for His guidance and favor while trusting His timing for the answer.

Key Takeaways

1. Ordinary people can achieve extraordinary things through faith in an extraordinary God
2. When facing challenges or opportunities, we must begin with God in prayer rather than relying on our own strength
3. Effective prayer includes three elements: worship, confession of sin, and bold requests
4. God's timing is perfect, even when it doesn't match our desired timeline
5. We need to move beyond 'safe' prayers and trust God with big, bold requests that require His intervention

Ending Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the example of Nehemiah and his faithful prayer life. As we leave this time together, help us to remember that You are the great and awesome God who keeps Your covenant of love with those who love You. Give us courage to bring our biggest challenges and opportunities to You in prayer, beginning with worship and confession. Help us to trust Your timing and Your ways, even when they don't match our expectations. May we be people who begin with You in all things, knowing that apart from You we can do nothing, but with You all things are possible. Transform our prayer lives and use us for Your glory in the days ahead. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.