

Nehemiah's foundation in prayer

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[0 : 00] Set me free, hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me. You have broken every chain, there's salvation in your name.

Jesus Christ, my living hope. Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Oh God, you are my living hope. Good morning. Lovely to see you.

Welcome. If you're sitting in here, welcome and I pray you will not just be blessed, but you will bless each other. And if you are joining us through the streaming, I pray what we do here this morning will bless you.

Make a big difference in your life. I'm excited. We had a week of 24-7 prayer. That's my highlight for today. But I want to say something.

[1 : 02] It's good for God's people to gather. And you know why? One of the reasons why it's good for us to gather? We go out into a broken world every day and we're faced with challenges.

We're faced with concerns. We're faced with things that frankly upset us. But you know what? We come back here on a Sunday morning and we get refreshed.

We get filled up and we are ready to face the week. So I pray for you a refreshing this morning through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Thank you, Father God, for keeping us through the past week and bringing us here today to continue our worship and praise.

Thank you that you keep your promises. You are faithful. Amen. So today marks the end of our 24 by 7, one week of 24 by 7 intentional prayer.

[2 : 13] And it's good for churches to do that. But it's good for us to have done it because this aligns with the series we've been doing on great prayers in the Bible.

I took a gem from each sermon we've had. Malcolm said, it's good for us to be prayed by others. And that's before we do anything else.

Before we start our own prayer. It's good for us to be prayed by others. Andrew said a number of things that I really liked.

But one of the things he said was he hoped that each time we read God's word, we'd be prompted to pray. And this was the week of prayer.

And there was a lot of God's words in the prayer guides we were given. So I felt that God was saying to us, pray. So please stand with me now and let us be persistent in praise by reading the words from Psalm 103.

[3 : 21] And if you were following the prayer guide, that was the start of our prayer guide. So let's say together. Praise the Lord, my soul.

All my inmost being. Praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul. And forget not all his benefits. Amen.

Amen. Father, as we think on your awesome nature, we fall to our knees and we humbly proclaim, you are amazing God.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[4 : 38] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. To the fragrance of spring Every creature you need In the song that it sings All exclaiming Indescribable Uncontainable You place the stars in the sky And you know them by name You are amazing God All powerful Unshameable Horsestruck we fall to our knees As we humbly proclaim You are amazing God Who has told every lightning bolt Where it should go Who's seen heavenly storehouses Ladent with snow

Who imagine the sun And give source to its light Yet conceals it To bring us the coolness of light God can't follow Indescribable Uncontainable You place the stars in the sky And you know them by

name You are amazing God All powerful All powerful Untameable All strong we fall to our knees As we humbly proclaim You are amazing God God You are amazing God You are amazing God Indescribable Uncontainable

You place the stars in the sky And you know them by name You are amazing God Incomparable Incomparable Unchangeable You see the depths of my heart And you love me the same You are amazing God So Andrew is coming up And there will be a short video And some interviews But I wanted just to say something here One second Sorry Andrew As we pray You may be seated As we praise the Lord We praise it in the context That we live in a world That is so broken There are broken families There are broken governments There are broken promises But you know what This uncontainable God

That we praise His promises are forever Andrew Over to you Amen Thank you so much Judith My name is Andrew For those that don't know me I wanted to share a little bit this morning About the Job Club Now many of you would have heard About the Job Club That we run here As a church To serve our community And we do this in partnership With CAP Christians Against Poverty And our Job Club Offers practical support And help And training for people At all stages of life To help them get into A job which is right for them Now the Job Club Started almost a year ago And it's been Really really exciting To be on this journey As a church And to see what's been happening Through the Job Club And I have to say It's been a lot of fun as well I've really enjoyed Being a part of it Now one of the highlights for me And one of the most fun parts For me last year Was watching last year We did One of the sessions We did a role play Of interviews Now we're going to watch

[9 : 13] A short video Of these role plays And in these role plays Participants of our Job Club Take the role of The interview panel So they're doing The interviewing And then members of our team And you'll probably recognise Members of our team Anthony and Mike And Ruth Were the people being interviewed For a fictional job A made up job In the Sandwich Hub Which is a made up Kind of sandwich shop So I want you to watch this video And have a look at the people Who are being interviewed And see who you think Would be the best person To get the job At the Sandwich Hub Hello Mr Anthony I'm Penny No I don't shake hands Oh you don't shake hands Okay thank you I'm Penny I'm the manager Of the Sandwich Hub And one of the questions We'd like to ask is Why would you like this job What attracted you To this job Oh hang on a minute Yeah what's up Sorry about that

Ah a job Yeah I'm not that bothered really It's my mum keeps nagging me She said you've got to get out Of the house You've got to get a job Right And she said you'd better Go on with this interview So that's why I'm here I can't be bothered really You can't Well thank you I'm sorry hang on Anthony what do you think Your strengths are Well I'm quite good in a fight Oh I'm so glad You've given me Your opportunity To work for you I really have been Looking forward to this For a long time I'm really good At all the jobs That I've been to so far I love making sandwiches Where I've been before I have really run the place Almost single handedly And I've got on very well with the staff Apart from a few of them That I didn't think You were making sandwiches As quick as I should have been Baking them But there you are So I think I'm probably Your ideal Where can I start Mike Can you tell us about

What you think Your weaknesses are I don't know that I've got Any weaknesses really I think most of my strengths Are pretty weak anyway But Actually I can turn my hand To anything As long as it's not too hard I'm not so sure About sandwich making But Depends what's in your sandwiches What's in your sandwiches Why are your sandwiches Better than Fred's down the road I used to work for him For a while But I thought Sandwiches were a bit Crusty One of the questions We'd like to ask Is Why would you like the job What interested you What attracted you to us Because As you'll see from my CV I've done various Customer facing roles In the past And I found that I really enjoy Helping people to Find what they need And Go away satisfied So that's one thing I've also I popped in A couple of weeks ago To the sandwich bar For a coffee And I was quite impressed By the friendliness

And the efficiency Of the staff Thank you to everyone Who took part In our In our interviews You're going to meet Some of them In a moment Who do you think Should get the job Hands up for Hands up for Anthony He was the first one You'd give Anthony the job Okay Hands up for Mike He waffled a bit Didn't he Hands up for Ruth Yay Let's give Ruth the job Well done Ruth At this point I'd like to invite Three people Who've been Involved in the job Club Over the last year They are Chris And Penny And Rachel If I can invite you To come and join me And take a seat up here And we're going

to ask them A little bit About the job club From their Perspective Welcome Penny If you would take a seat In the middle there That'd be great Rachel can go on the end Chris you can come And sit over here That's wonderful Now we have here Chris who's our Ministry trainee And he took part In the job club As one of the Participants And Penny Who's been one of our Participants in the In the job club And Rachel who's the

Manager of the job club So we'd like to hear From them About their perspective Now Chris You took part In the job club As a participant As part of your What you're doing here In your ministry trainee Year Part of the idea Of the ministry trainee Year is to Help you to figure out Kind of what's next Kind of thing So how do you feel That the job club Has helped maybe Prepare you for Potential future Employment I'll give you that Great Thanks Andrew Yeah so At uni You know I've been to sort of Careers advice things Before and they Kind of give you Advice on how to Do you know Prepare for interviews How to write a CV That kind of thing But one of the things I really like about The job club Is that it kind of Does a bit more Than that So it kind of Looks at you know What your Motivations are Finding out what Your strengths And kind of Positive qualities Are as a person And also we

[14:16] Normally do Over lunch Do a slot Where someone Talks about How their faith Has helped them In the job That they have And that's been Really cool to hear About as well Brilliant And how would you Say that the Job club here Has been different From other kind of Careers advice That you've had At university And in other Settings before Coming here Yeah so It's kind of I guess it's kind of More about Helping you As a person As well And working out How you kind of Overcome different Challenges Because it can be Quite difficult You know doing Interviews and Not always being Successful And picking yourself Up and trying again And that's been Really helpful That is yeah Brilliant Okay well Penny I'd like to ask you A couple of questions Now thank you so Much for joining us And we saw you On the you were The chair of that Interview panel And you have to Say you did a Fantastic job On that so Well done for that Can you tell us Penny how did you First hear about The job club And what prompted You to come and Join the job club

Here Well actually Can you hear me Yeah Just hold it Quite close Yeah Sorry Yeah great Not used to this Okay I actually heard About it Because at the Beginning of 2022 I knew I'd Have to start Looking for a job I needed to I wanted to But I didn't Know how to And although I said to my Friends and family That's what I'd Like to do I was internally Going how do I Do it The job situation Has changed so much There's the internet Things have moved On so much And my cv As malcolm happily Knows it's like War and peace So I decided that If I could get Some help I would But I didn't know Where to turn My friend who Actually belongs To another church She sent me through The information About the job club And I just looked At it going This is too good To be true What's going on And actually I was a bit scared As well And I thought It's going to be full

I know it's going To be full So I walked away For a couple of days Kept looking at the email And going Do I Don't I What do I do And then I decided Oh what the heck I will just pick the phone up And see what happened And I spoke to Rachel And much to my surprise She said We've got places And I said Oh right Okay So I went through The process Of saying yes Immediately Sending information Coming to the drop in And I think It was the 26th of January Did you say That we actually sat down For the drop in session And I filled in the paperwork And that's the start Of my journey Brilliant But also to help me come And to keep me motivated And answerable In some ways Is that I told my friends And family What I was doing Yeah So I knew they'd ask Yeah And that was Give you an extra An extra kind of prompt Yeah That's really helpful Yeah And they were supportive And encouraging Yeah Brilliant And can I ask What were you doing Before coming to the Job club Before the job club From 1992 To about 2016

I was my mother's main carer I held down a job At the time That was fine Unfortunately In the middle of the 2000s I became ill And looking after her needs And my needs It was too much I had to give up Paid work Hoping obviously That I'd go back to it At some point Yeah In the meantime My GP Who could see I was quite down At the time Suggested that I go and look For voluntary work Especially with animals Because I love animals As everyone who knows me knows And so I Went to Hearing Dogs For Deaf people They actually had a position And I did some Volunteering with them And my volunteering Increased Or decreased As things went along Latterly My mother passed away In October 2016 I was a bit down For a time But I carried on The volunteering It was security It was routine It was what I needed And then I started To increase Got myself together Got enough

Volunteering hours Felt I was able To start To look for Possible paid work Although again Not quite sure how At that time And then COVID struck So I then went backwards And became isolated So that's Yeah So coming out Of that kind of Long period You know Caring for your mother And then you know With COVID And that period of isolation And you mentioned earlier That it was a little bit scary The idea of coming To a job club How did it feel The first day When you came to the Building Came to the job club For the first time What was that experience Like for you?

[18 : 51] Well I think anyone Who was in the room Actually knew How I felt at the time I walked in Going Oh my goodness There are so many People here I just want to Reverse out here And turn round And go home It was because of COVID We've been told I live on my own We've been told To stay away From other people Not to meet indoors You had your bubbles You know So for like two years I lived like that And then suddenly And I was meeting people When I was out and about And doing things But it's slightly different I was volunteering At hearing dogs But I knew the place I knew the people It was all safe and secure Here was completely different I recognised Rachel And a couple of other people Who I'd met On the week before But yes it was scary It was like What am I doing Is this right But I've told people I'm here I'm coming I need to sit down So I have to admit

I don't remember much Of session one But I did stay Yes So well done You didn't reverse out I did not reverse out Although yeah The door was open And you continued With the job club And can you tell us What difference Has the job club Made to you How has it helped you Oh in numerous ways I wouldn't be doing this now To be fair I would have probably shirked And said no It's helped me In so many ways I realised that actually Physically I think I'd be okay But mentally And psychologically I probably wasn't up for it I mean it was quite a fright To walk in on the first day And realised just how scared I was And how much effort it took To sit and go through The first session It became a lot easier Everyone is lovely Everyone is very friendly They're supportive They're encouraging They walk beside you They do not push you I felt safe and secure I got to know people People got to know me It was a great situation

To actually sit down And as Krista said Go through the steps And start with you Instead of Right what job do you want How are you going to get it This is how you interview Etc You work through it So you did the little steps At the time Those steps helped It culminated in Doing the interviews That we did Yeah Unfortunately I missed One session In the first Job club Because I had other Commitments at the time So Rachel very kindly Invited me back To do that session In the second Job club I then Was given the opportunity Yet again To come back And do the whole thing again Because I built a lot On my confidence And I was going forward And I in fact Took more as well From the second Full time Also the job club Has changed I noticed A few changes As I'd gone along But the other thing They also did Which was great for me Was to actually Signpost me To adult learning And I've done Some computer Courses there And again That's helped With my digital skills And my confidence In actually now Computers Etc So all in all It has been Absolutely great And I want to Thank everybody Who has been there Helped and supported me Throughout my time Here And I know you Continue to support me Which is wonderful And I just want to Say thank you Brilliant Thank you so much And thank you so much For being willing To share As I think you said I don't think You would have Been up to this A year ago We've seen you So much growing Confidence Throughout the course And that's been Really wonderful To see And really encouraging And I know You're exploring Various different Possibilities at the moment And we wish you All the best in that Can we just give a round Of applause for Penny Because it's so great That she's sharing With us today Thank you so much Penny And I'd like to Come to Rachel now Rachel is the manager Of our job club So Rachel A year since we started What have been the Encouragements for you Looking back over the Last year We have had so many Encouragements over the Last year We've so much to be Thankful for Perhaps a few Specific things We have been Enormously encouraged To see eight people Move into work And as a team We are praying That that number Will go up to nine Within the next few weeks But more generally It's been wonderful To see people Growing in confidence And Penny's shared A little of How that's been for her And I think Our greatest encouragement Of all Has simply been Seeing God at work Through the job club We've seen so many Answers to prayer Over the last year And it's been Wonderful to see People starting To engage More deeply With us Signing up for Hope Explored And Alpha courses So that's been Massively encouraging Great And can you tell us What's next For the job club

[23 : 56] Well in the immediate Term Our next Steps to employment Course starts On the 15th of February So we're very busy Getting ready for that But We do far more Than the course Our strap line Is with you On your job seeking Journey And the course Is just the start Of that journey We aim to walk Alongside people As long as they Need us And want us And I'm immensely Thankful for our Brilliant team And our wonderful Job club Coach James From Spine Baptist Church I think we're at a Stage now Where we really Need an additional Coach Just keep doing What we do And we have Plenty of ideas As to how we Could develop And move forward But we can't Really put those Into practice Until we have An additional coach So if anybody

Would be interested In exploring that Please do speak to me Or to Andrew Yeah brilliant Well let's say a prayer For the job club Lots to give thanks for And lots to pray into As well So let me just say A prayer Father God We thank you so much For leading us Into starting the job club For everything that you've done Through the job club We thank you for the lives Changed through the job club We thank you for those Eight people who have Who have found work We thank you for others Who've made connections With the church And got involved in other ways We thank you so much For what you've done In Penny's life And just the way You've worked in her And bring her to a point Where she's got so much Confidence And ready to seek Employment now And yeah we do pray For her that you'll Provide the perfect job For her And we do pray For the new course Starting on the 15th of February We pray that you'll Bring people along That you want to be there Just bless the team And help the team Equip the team As they serve Those people who are Going to be joining The job club And yeah we do pray That you would raise up Another person To be a coach And join that team We pray this In Jesus name And we give you thanks Amen Amen

Well thank you so much For joining me And I'll hand back to Judith Thank you so much Yeah I'll carry on Sometimes it's easy For us to say I'm just one person What can I do It's really easy To say that But whatever we do For a living You know God doesn't Look at that And grade you As to Your ability To work in his kingdom He will use Everything We do Everything we bring Everything we are William Carey Was a shoemaker Who also became A minister And one of the things He said was Expect great things Of God Attempt great things

For God Why? I believe it's because We have a great God A great big God So I'm going to invite Some of my friends To come And sing Our God Is a great big God And because I dance But I can't Sign and dance Don't look at me Look at them Go on Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God And who holds us in his hands Our God is a great big God

Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God And he holds us in his hands He's higher than a skyscraper And he's deeper than a submarine He's wider than the universe And beyond my world is great And he's known me And he's loved me And he's loved me Since before the world began How wonderful To be a part of God God's amazing God Our God is a great big God And He holds us in his hands Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God And He holds us in His hands Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God And He holds us in His hands

[29 : 04] He's higher than the skyscraper And he's deeper than the submarine He's wider than the universe And beyond my wildest breeze And he's lovely, and he's lovely Since before the world began How wonderful to be a part Of God's amazing life Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God And He holds us in His hands Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God Our God is a great big God And he holds us in his hands.

And he holds us in his hands. Amen. Thank you.

Gosh, you are all so good at this. Amazing. Thank you. Thank you, Judy. Thank you, my wonderful friends. So, I'm going to ask you a question.

What is 10,080? It's a number. But what does that number represent? It represents the number of minutes of prayer over seven days, 24 by seven.

I think it's the number of hours. Sorry, not minutes. Yeah. Yeah. That's a big number. And if we fill the heavens with prayer for 10,080 hours, do you know what's going on up in heaven?

[31 : 02] Firstly, God is saying, wow, look at my people. They're praying. And you know what Satan is saying? Oh, my goodness. They're praying. 10,080.

Some of us prayed on our own. Some of us prayed here at church in that beautiful prayer room. Some of us prayed in our house groups.

Some of us prayed 6.30 in the morning with the other deacons and elders. Now, can you imagine if two or three people prayed in the same slot?

That 10,080 goes up significantly. Okay? But what happens if one person prayed every day for seven days in that one hour slot?

That one person gave 420 hours to God. Wow. Wow. Wow. So, let's be encouraged because in that time we're not only praying and crying out and asking.

[32 : 08] We're listening. So, I'd like you now to share with everybody else your experience of praying. What did it feel like? Did you hear God saying anything?

Did you feel moved to do something? Just shout. And my dear friend, Stephen up there, will attempt to type your words on the screen.

So, you need to shout really loudly so I can hear. Sorry? Closer to God. I felt that my mind was emptying somehow.

So, emptying of useless thoughts. We'll get back the screen. So, closer to God, emptying of useless thoughts.

Avoided distraction. Avoided distraction. What about you children? There were activities for children to do in this week of prayer.

[33 : 07] Did you do anything enjoyable? Anything you want to tell us about? I said happy. Happy. Oh, wow. Thanks, Isaac. Happy. Anybody else?

Strengthened. All right. Sorry. I'll come back to you. You go. Strengthened. Strengthened. Go on, Nick. God loves you.

That's what Nick got out of his prayers. God loves you. Wow. Sorry? Relax. Relaxed. Mmm. Did anybody feel God saying, get up and do something?

Did he say, get up and go make a cup of tea? Did he say, put some matchsticks on your eyelids? You're falling asleep. But let's just enjoy for a moment what God did in those one-hour slots.

Let's think about them. And let's in our hearts praise him and thank him. And I thank the children who participated because they're learning to pray from a little young age.

[34 : 18] They'll be prayer warriors. And that's what prayer does. Prayer prepares us for the battle. So thank you all very much. Thank you for participating.

I don't know if Steve was able to get. No, it's no. We tried it. It didn't work. But let me see if I can remember some of the things. So, Roger said, closer to God.

Then we got calm and putting, emptying of the mind. And Miriam. No, Marian.

What did you get again? Avoided distraction. Avoided distraction. Nick said, God loves you. God respects you. Isaac said, happy.

Well, thank you all. I can't remember all of them. I'm at that age. But thank you all very much. So, we now just pray for children and youth as they go out.

[35 : 26] Oh, sorry, Andrew. And for Wow Extra. Yes, sorry. So, let's just pray. Heavenly Father, our children are amazing.

They are little sponges. And they are here soaking up the honor and glory that we give to you. And they are soaking up our actions and our deeds.

So, I pray for them today that what they see in us will help them to be, to mature into adults for you, Lord.

And to bring honor and glory to your name. So, as they go out to their groups, give them an inquisitive mind for your word. Give them joy in the activities, Lord.

And I also pray that their leaders will show and model you to them in patience and in love. And as Wow Extra meets too, Lord, I pray that there will be such an outpouring of your word into our Wow guests.

[36 : 33] That they too will feel prompted and ready to pray. Bless them all. Bless Judy and the team who will be taking Wow Extra, Lord.

We ask this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you, everybody. And Paul tells us in Philippians 4, verse 6, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

[38 : 29] So let's do that as we pray together. Lord God, thank you that we have the privilege to call you our Father.

And like a good Father, you want us to approach you with all our prayers and requests. In a world where we seem to be moving from one crisis to another, thank you that you are as solid as a rock and that we can take refuge under your protection.

Thank you, Father, that though we were once your enemies because of Jesus' death on the cross and his rising from the dead, you have made the way for us to come home into a right relationship with you.

Father, thank you that your ear is attentive to our prayers because you have redeemed us by your great strength in Jesus.

As we pray, you might be reminded of some of the ways that you haven't lived God's way this week. Maybe you said something or thought something or did something and you know it was wrong.

[39 : 46] So let's take some time in the silence to confess it to God. 1 John 1 verse 9 says, If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Thank you, God, that you restore us when we confess our sins to you. We pray now for our town. We realize that there's so much hurt just on our doorstep.

People missing homes. People without jobs. People without options. And people without purpose. Please empower us as a church to show a foretaste of your new creation as we try to meet the needs of our community.

Thank you for the CAP Job Club and for Rachel and her team and the time that they've given to help people as they look for work.

[41 : 19] Please help them as they prepare for their Next Steps course. And we ask that you provide an additional coach to help them in the work. Father, thank you for providing us as a church with a wonderful building and good food for lunch today.

And in the Living Stones meeting this afternoon, we ask for your leading as we consider which direction to take with this project.

If there are any disagreements, please help us to share them respectfully. Please help us to look not to our own interests, but to yours above all.

Lord God, we pray for de-escalation of conflicts around the world, such as in the war between Russia and Ukraine.

May world leaders recognise that you are the Lord of all the nations on earth. And may they turn from their selfish ways to glorify you.

[42 : 35] We pray also for Christians in both Ukraine and in Russia, that they would bring the light of the gospel message to two nations where the darkness of conflict is felt so distinctly.

And we pray for Christians across the world who are being violently persecuted for their faith. Thank you for your promise to ultimately deliver Christians from all our trials, and that no one can snatch your followers from your hand.

And we pray that you would give your people endurance, and that their witness would bring honour and glory to you. And we pray for their persecutors.

Forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing. Please turn them around, as you turned the Apostle Paul around, so that the world would see that you are God.

Father, thank you that you've not left us alone, but you've given us the Bible, which is your word to us. And you've given us your Holy Spirit, who reveals your word to us, so that we may know you better, and become more and more like Jesus.

[43 : 59] And as we come to the reading of the Bible, please help us to clear our minds of any distractions, so we can give our full attention to what you are saying to us.

As Paul reads our passage, and as Aubrey explains it to us, please help us to listen, and please use this time to change us, and make us more like Jesus.

And we ask all these things in Jesus' name, so that you would get the praise. Amen. Amen. As you know, we are partway through a series on great prayers in the Bible, and this morning we're looking at Nehemiah's prayer, at the beginning of the book of Nehemiah.

You will see that it's to be found on page 484 in the Pew Bibles, or you are welcome to just listen. Nehemiah, chapter 1, verses 1 to 11.

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. [45 : 46] 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.

Then I said, Lord 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 opened 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 weakly towards you.

We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, if you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations.

[47 : 17] But if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my name.

They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.

Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name.

Give your servant success today by granting him favour in the presence of this man. I was cupbearer to the king.

Well, good morning, everyone.

[48 : 31] It's nice to be looking out at a church that's slightly fuller than the ones that I normally go to. But some of you may have heard me say this before, but I'll tell you the story again.

It was some years ago that Karen and I went to the funeral of a cousin's husband. He regretfully had no faith and so this funeral was conducted by the undertaker and intended to have no religious content of any kind.

Imagine our surprise, therefore, when the undertaker announced that we would now say the Lord's Prayer together. The undertaker then went on to inform us that this was the only prayer in the Bible. Karen, I think, at that moment had to physically hold me down. I do find it particularly annoying when people who clearly have never read the Bible and rejected its main message profess to know what it says.

Of course, we know that the Bible is, in fact, full of prayers, some of which we only have in outline and others we have in detail. There are many, many prayers in the Old Testament.

[49 : 56] Indeed, most of the Psalms are prayers. And we have the prayers of Jesus, not just the Lord's Prayer, but that's obviously very important.

But just look at the amazing passage of prayer you'll find in John's Gospel on the night before he was betrayed. And Paul's letters, full of prayers.

Every single letter has some form of prayer from Paul. So today we come to the end of our week of prayer. That does not mean, by the way, that praying can now stop.

But leading up to this, as we've been reminded by Judith, we looked at two great prayers. Two weeks ago, Malcolm helped us to look at the prayer of Hezekiah from 2 Kings chapter 19.

And last week, Andrew very helpfully led us through the prayer of Daniel in Daniel chapter 9. And today, as you know, we're looking at the letter that Paul has just read to us from Nehemiah chapter 1.

[51 : 08] Of course, knowing that I would be speaking today on this passage, I'd been looking at this passage and looking at it. And last Sunday morning, as I was sitting there and I was listening to Andrew going through the prayer of Daniel, I suddenly found myself, hold on, Andrew's preaching the sermon that I've been thinking about.

In fact, I said to Andrew afterwards, thank you for preaching the sermon for me. When we look at the prayer of Daniel and the prayer of David, they are very, very similar.

So what I want to do first is look at the similarities between these two prayers and by doing that, remind us of some of the main points that Andrew shared with us last week. And if you weren't here last week, you can see that.

But then I want to move on and see what else we can learn from the prayer of Nehemiah as we put it into the context of his situation. And maybe we can see how that can apply to us, especially as we meet together after the service and lunch today to consider where we are with our Living Stones project.

So let's first of all look at the prayer of Nehemiah alongside the prayer of Daniel. Well, I know you probably can't read all the words that are on that, but if you read the words on there, the wording is identical.

[52 : 30] Daniel says, the Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments. And Nehemiah says, 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.

They say exactly the same thing. Now, it is unlikely that though Daniel's prayer had been written probably over 100 years before Nehemiah, it's unlikely that Nehemiah would have known Daniel's prayer.

In fact, it's most probable that they were both quoting a well-known Israelite prayer. But what's the important point is, they both chose to start by recognising who God is.

Lord, the God of heavens, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love. We need to start our prayers prompted by the God that we find shown to us in his word.

And when we pray, we need to start by remembering God's word. And then we go on to responding to your promises.

[53 : 53] And Daniel says, we do not make requests to you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Daniel is appealing to God's promises.

promises. And Nehemiah says, if you return to me and obey my commands, that even though your exiled people are the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place that I have chosen.

Both Daniel and Nehemiah look at God's promises. The promises. They must remind themselves that he has promised mercy.

And then, another point that Andrew made last week, both go on to acknowledge our sin. They have not obeyed the laws of Moses.

Daniel says, we have not obeyed the Lord, our God, or kept the laws he gave us through his servants, the prophets. Nehemiah, I confess the sins we brethren, including myself, and my father's family, have committed.

[55 : 11] I want, just for a moment, to deal with a point that Andrew made last week, but I don't think he had time to expand upon.

See, Daniel, we know, was a very devout man. We know a lot about him. We know that he and his friends got into a lot of trouble for sticking to God's word. His friends had been thrown into a fiery furnace, and he'd been thrown into a lion's den.

So you might think, well, what, why is, why is Daniel, this righteous man, why is he confessing sins? Now, we don't know very much about Nehemiah, apart from his father's name and what he did as a job.

We learn a lot about Nehemiah throughout the book as we see what he does. And we don't know, see, how he reacts to the news he hears from Jerusalem.

But all the things that we learn about him and later in this book mean that he clearly was a man who was following God. You see, we need to understand that we, of course, need to come to God and confess our sins.

[56 : 31] We need to be making that part of our prayers. probably, if you're anything like me, absolutely daily. We need to confess our sins.

But we've just been talking about responding to his promises. See, one of his promises is, as John puts in his first letter to the church.

John says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

See, this is one of the greatest parts of our Christian life. We can know the release from our sins. we can know the freedom of Christ in our lives.

You see, when we confess our sins, the devil loves to get in at that point. Has God really forbidden you?

[57 : 39] You see, the devil wants us to make doubt God's promises. He does not want us to be living in the joy and freedom that Christ gives us. So let's be clear, when we've confessed our sins, we do not need to keep on digging them up so that we confess them again.

Don't know about you, I've got enough trouble confessing the ones I do each day, let alone remembering yesterday's. You see, if we have confessed our sins, they are gone.

Micah says, who is a God like you who pardons sins and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance. You do not stay angry forever, but delight to show mercy.

You will again have compassion on us. You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

just understand that. Jesus has thrown your sins into the depths of the sea.

[58 : 48] As I once heard the great preacher John Stott say, and then Jesus came along and put up a big sign, no fishing.

Yes, of course, we need to keep on confessing our sins because we keep on sinning. But we can know his grace and forgiveness again and again.

We can live our lives in the freedom that Christ has given us. So don't keep on digging up things to confess. So many times, I think we tend to do that.

But that is not the same thing as acknowledging the sins of our nation, our world, and maybe our church. Of course, as Nehemiah prays here in verse 6, we do need to confess our part, our part of our parents as he does there.

Things that have gone on in the past. We need to pray acknowledging sin. Why? You see, what we're in fact doing is interceding.

[60 : 02] What we want to see is our world turn from its ways. Just as Daniel and Nehemiah wanted to see the people of Israel turn from their ways.

You see, when we pray, the most important thing is that we do see things as God sees it. when we pray, we need to be looking at our world, our church, our family, ourselves, as God sees them. Because when we see those things as God sees them, we're able to pray in the way that God wants us to pray. we need to have God's view.

We need to pray for our world. We don't even keep on confessing the sins, but we need to acknowledge them and see it from God's point of view.

And the last point which Andrew brought out of Daniel's prayer, was that God's name would be exalted. Jesus started his prayer as we know it, the Lord's prayer.

[61 : 22] Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Nehemiah ends his prayer by saying what he wants God, that he wants God to hear his prayer because he delights in revering his name.

Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. As Daniel also did.

For your sake, Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary. Lord, for your sake, my God, do not delay because your city and your people bear your name.

so having seen how he can see the points of Daniel's prayer, in the prayer of Nehemiah, just put up this slide, which is the one that Andrew put up, ended last week.

Mysteriously, all his points seem to spell out the word pray, how well how well he did that. But all those points are here in this prayer of Nehemiah.

[62 : 52] I know because I've seen there last week because Andrew went through them going, oh, he's done that one. Yes, he's done that. So what else can we find in this prayer of Nehemiah that might apply to us today?

Well, let's just for a few minutes put this book of Nehemiah and the historical background to this prayer into some kind of context.

Now, Jerusalem was destroyed on July the 18th. Now, when I say, I know that's very small, you're not going to be able to read it very well up there, but these dates are somebody who's gone along and actually translated the kind of dates they had in those days into kind of a modern calendar.

So, of course, they didn't have the calendar. The calendar we use was invented by the Romans. But kind of the middle of summer, 586 BC, Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple was burned down.

You'll find that in 2 Kings chapter 24. On October the 29th, 539 BC, so remember in BC times, as time goes on, the number gets smaller.

[64 : 18] So, Babylon, who had invaded Jerusalem, was fell to the Medes and the Persians, as totally predicted by Daniel.

And if you know the story of Daniel, you'll know how the writing appeared on the wall and told Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom was going to fall to the Medes and the Persians.

Hence, Babylon, who had overrun Jerusalem, it was named the Medes and the Persians who were in control.

And it was 536 BC when a guy called Zerubbabel led the first wave of Jewish exiles to return. And you can read all about that in Ezra chapters 1 to 6.

And they began building the temple. And on February the 18th, or there around, 516 BC, the temple was completed and dedicated.

[65 : 24] 586 BC, it was destroyed. 516 BC, it was restored. 70 years. And what did God say? God said, you will be in exile for 70 years.

God's word is accurate. Accurate. Accurate. When he says 70 years, he doesn't mean 71 or 72. He means 70 years. And then there's a gap, a long gap of about 57 years where we don't know much about what happened in that time.

Apart from the fact that that was most probably the time if you've ever read the book of Esther and know the story of Esther. That's probably around that time that Esther comes in.

But it was around 455 BC, in the spring, probably mid-March, that Ezra left with 1,500 men and their families and went off and he arrived in Jerusalem in August.

It was just, interestingly, that it took all that time for them to get from Babylon to, sorry, from Susa to Jerusalem.

[66 : 40] And so in our reading today, we picked up, pick up the story some nine years later. This is at the end of 446 BC.

Probably equivalent of our December. And Nehemiah gets this report from Hanai. He comes back and he says, those who have 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.

What is it that so upsets Nehemiah? Well, last week, Andrew showed us this picture.

See, I have nicked all his slides. this is the O2 arena and the point that Andrew made last week was that this was a thing that bore, that bears the name, O2.

[67 : 54] And made the point that what upset Daniel was the Israelites bore the name of God. and what was happening was a disgrace to him because they bore his name.

They bear his name. Well, I thought he might have used this picture, you see, because in February last year, Storm Eunice, maybe you remember that just on a year ago, tore a large part of the roof off the arena.

It also tore the roof off Ewington Village Hall, but that didn't seem to make it into the national headlines. Made it into the local newspaper, but so what did the owners of the O2 do?

Well, the first thing they did was blocked off a bit of it and they got the building open within a week. And they repaired the roof as soon as they could.

See, they couldn't leave the building that bears their name looking like that. Now, of course, we can also argue that they wanted to keep the commercial revenue coming in.

[69 : 06] I'm sure that was also part of it. But in fact, they had to put a temporary roof on. They're going to have to wait for nearly 18 months to manufacture the special plastic and get the materials that the roof's made of.

So they're going to have to wait some while before they can put a permanent new roof on it. But they put a temporary roof on it so they could use the building. The building could be the way it is.

You see, what upsets Nehemiah is that the city of Jerusalem, the city of David, is still in ruins.

It's 70 years since they rebuilt the temple. That's as long as the children of Israel were in exile. But the city walls are still untouched.

And in those days, the city could not be a city but they had its walls. The temple was vulnerable. They had no way of protecting the house of God.

this city of David which to the Jews was very special. And the people returned, said, they're in disgrace.

[70 : 16] See, what's this saying to the people around? Oh, they rebuilt the temple but they can't rebuild the city. If you notice, if you could read on in chapter 2, he says to the king, why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins?

Nehemiah had a passion that God's city should be restored. So, Nehemiah, you need to watch, notice this.

First of all, he weeps, then he mourns, then he fasts, then he prays. I wonder how many times we've mourned in that kind of way.

Mourned over what the state of this world is. As Nehemiah looked at the city, and what does he pray?

See, as he prays, he also plans what needs to be done and we'll see that in a second and he prays that he will have the courage to do what needs to be done. So, how often do we see a hopeless situation and we don't know what to do?

[71 : 36] So, we say that we'll pray. How often do we say, and I'm guilty of this as much as anything, let's just pray. pray. Sorry, Judas, you said it earlier.

It's kind of in our language. Let's just pray. What do we mean by just pray? Praying itself is enough. We all fall into this and I know I do it, so I'm not blaming anybody.

We just use, we say, let's just pray. No, let's do the most important thing. Let's pray. Let's pray. Nehemiah did not just pray.

He used his prayers to help him make a plan. And then, at the end of that, we learn that Nehemiah, in fact, was a high-ranking official.

He didn't make that clear at the beginning. It means he would have been in the king's presence often, and it made him a man of influence. And his plan is to get the king to help him.

[72 : 46] So the next step is in April, 445 BC, when Nehemiah speaks to the king. And you can read all about that in chapter 2. Let's just understand that.

Nehemiah heard the news in December, and he spoke to the king in April. He'd been praying for four months. He didn't just pray.

He prayed for four months. Now, does that mean that Nehemiah was a little bit long-winded in his praying? No.

Because if you look in chapter 2 and verse 4, you will see that he was also a man who used what we might call arrow press. When the king says, what do you want?

Yes, Nehemiah is ready, but what does he do first of all? Verse 4, the king said to me, what it is you want? Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king.

[73 : 51] Nehemiah is ready with detailed requests. He knows what he wants. He wants wood from this person. He wants this. He wants this. He wants this. He's got his requests ready. He's got his plans ready.

But he still shoots up an arrow prayer before he responds. Well, what was the result of this four months of prayer?

Well, if we read on, we learn that Nehemiah's plan to rebuild the walls was very successful, and the walls of Jerusalem are finished. finished. You may not pick this up from reading the rest of Nehemiah, but the walls of Jerusalem were finished.

When? In September. Six months. When we read the book of Nehemiah, we need to know that all we read in the first seven chapters takes place in six months.

He asks the king for help in April, and the work is finished six months later. The actual building of the walls, we read later on, takes 52 days.

[75 : 08] Four months praying, less than two months building. Perhaps that's a good ratio for us to think about today. Four months praying, see, for 70 years, nothing had been done.

Nehemiah's praise for four months, and six months later, the job was finished. After lunch, we're going to have an open church meeting to have an update on where we are with our living stones renovation project for this room, and the rooms behind here.

Is it coincidence that we're looking at Nehemiah today? Well, I'm sure it's not, because I think Malcolm probably thought about this, but what do I think that God's word is saying to us today?

Well, I can tell you what I think, and you need to make your own minds up. Let's look at Nehemiah. What was the foundation of his success in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem?

Nehemiah's foundation was prayer. A prayer that was not just begging God for help. Interesting, if you read all the prayers in Nehemiah, not just this one, but all the others, never at any stage does he mention bricks or stones or anything else.

[76 : 36] He's on a rebuilding project. Would you have understood that from that prayer that we've been looking at this morning? What was he interested in? God's name.

Confessing sins. Acknowledging. What was he looking at? That God's name would be honoured. Go on to the last slide, please, Stephen.

You see, Andrew finished with this slide last week. And I want to end with the same slide.

Because that's the foundation of prayer, prompted by God's word, responding to promises, acknowledging sin, exhorting his name. And when we pray like that, things happen.

May God grant the foundation for our Living Stones project will be in prayer. Thank you. Let's just think about that for a minute.

[77 : 57] Let's just think about that and here's the gem I took from the sermon Nehemiah's persistence in prayer he prayed for four months some of us were saying he sat around doing nothing for four months oh no he did the only thing that needed to have been done and he did it for as long as it was needed to be done he did it for four months and look what happened four months of prayer six months of rebuilding we did a week of prayer look what's going to happen after that week of prayer and I encourage you to pray without ceasing as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 13 we should pray without ceasing and the last part of Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 says give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man he didn't even call his name this man because he was talking to the king above all kings so he's not going to recognize any other little king but it's the last sentence that got me

I was cupbearer to the king there's a whole lot loaded in that sentence to me that prayer says Nehemiah as Aubrey said was now ready for action it was his statement of intent give me success why would he ask for success he's going to do something he said send me Lord and you know the Lord likes to hear us say send me here I am send me so I'm going to ask you to stand and join me in this next song which we're going to say as a prayer like Nehemiah we've prayed for a week and we're saying to the Lord here am I send me so let's read together woman see how the world groans beneath sin's spell

Lord who will go someone must care for them someone tell tell of Christ tell of his power to set men free here am I Lord send me send me I am wanted to be what you want me to be use me when and wherever and how you best see here am I Lord send me send me send me Lord Lord I will go Lord I will go here am I my Lord send me send me

I am wanting I am wanting to be what you want me to be use me when and wherever and how best you see here am I my Lord send me send me make me a servant to serve just you Lord I'll obey use me I pray teach me teach me teach me to speak may my life ring true all my words and all my actions pleasing you here am I my Lord send me send me I am wanting to hear what you want me to be use me when and wherever ever and how you best see here am I my Lord send me■■■

Thank you.

[83 : 13] I have heard my people cry, for who dwell in dark and sin, my hand will save.

I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.

I will speak my word to them, who shall I send? Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.

[84 : 33] I have wept for love of them. They turn away. I will break their hearts of stone.

Give them hearts for love alone. I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and vain.

[85 : 45] I will set a feast for them. My hand will save. Amen. Thine is spread.

Thine is spread. I will provide. Till the hearts are satisfied. I will give my life to them.

Whom shall I send? Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart. So that's our personal commitment.

[86 : 47] Let us now commit as a church to rise. Arise, O church. O church, arise and put your armor on.

Hear the call of Christ, our captain. For now the weak can say that they are strong.

In the strength that God has given. With shield of faith and belt of truth. We'll stand against the devil's lies.

An army bold, whose battle cry is love. Reaching out to those in darkness.

Our call to war. Our call to war. To love the captive sore. But to rage against the captor.

[88 : 04] And with the sword that makes the wounded whole. We will fight with faith and valor.

When faced with trials on every side. We know the outcome is secure.

And Christ will have the prize for which he died. An inheritance of nations.

Come see the cross. Where love and mercy meet. As the Son of God is stricken.

Then see his foes lie crushed beneath his feet. For the conqueror has risen.

[88 : 59] And as the stone is rolled away. And Christ emerges from the grave.

This victory march continues till the day. Every eye and heart shall see him. And as the stone, so spirit come.

Take strength in every stride. Give grace for every hurdle. That we may run with faith.

To win the prize of a servant good and faithful. As saints of all still line the way.

Retelling triumphs of his grace. We hear their calls and hunger for the day.

[89 : 59] When with Christ we stand in glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let me bless you.

And you may want to reach out and just grab it. Romans 15 verses 5 to 9 and verse 13 says. May the God who gives endurance. And you may want to reach out and just grab it.

And you may want to reach out and just grab it. Romans 15 verses 5 to 9 and verse 13 says.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement. Give you the same attitude of mind toward each other.

That Christ Jesus had. So that with one mind and one voice. You may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[91 : 02] Accept one another then. Just as Christ accepted you. In order to bring praise to God.

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews.

On behalf of God's truth. So that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed. And moreover that the Gentiles.

That's you and me. Might glorify God for his mercy. So. May the God of hope. Fill you with all joy.

And peace. As you trust in him. So that you may overflow. With hope. By the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Please be seated. Just a reminder. And you've heard it several times through this service.

We're going to have. A fellowship lunch.

[92 : 01] And then we'll have an open church meeting. To look at living stones. And I just. Orbit

said. It's not coincidence that we're studying Nehemiah.

You know what rebuilding that wall meant. I read somewhere that. Intercessory prayer was like standing in the gap of a wall. A wall.

And that's what the children of Israel did when they were under attack. If the wall was broken. They went and stood. In that hole. So that the enemy couldn't come in. And that was. They did it.

In unity. They then. Rebuilding the wall. Required unity. One voice. One God. God. So let us.

Go into our lunch. Our fellowship lunch. And fellowship. Wonderfully. And then meet in unity. Under God's grace. Go into the week. With power and might.

[92 : 57] Of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.