**Day 1 – Return to society**

Read Nehemiah 11:1 – 4

1. How did the Israelites decide which people to go first?
2. Casting lots could sound like a form of gambling. Why is it good in this case (you may want to look at the end of chapter 10 and remember where their focus is)?

[Read Nehemiah 11:5 – 12:26]

1. God has allowed them to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. As you read this next section, think about the emotions and feelings that are shown.

Read Nehemiah 12:27 – 43

1. When was the last time that you rejoiced in God like we see here? Have you ever done?
2. Make a list of the reasons to rejoice in God and then spend time rejoicing in Him. Don’t forget to think about how we are protected and kept safe, like the walls were there to protect the Israelites and keep them safe.

Read Nehemiah 12:44 – 47

1. What role were the priests undertaking in the society?
2. What role did the musicians fulfil?
3. Everyone did their role and did not try and do something they were not. What role do you have to play in our church family? Are you fulfilling that role? Why not chat that through with someone?

**Day 2 – Warnings about wavering**

*Nehemiah would have had a nice end after Chapter 12. The walls had been rebuilt, the focus was back on God, the were great celebrations and a determination to have God at the centre and serve him. But then we get chapter 13 which serves as a warning.*

Read Nehemiah 13:1 – 31

1. How is the tone of this chapter different from the last few we have read?
2. List the different people who have had their attention drawn away from God.
3. List what has drawn their attention away from God.
4. List how they are dealt with. Notice how serious it is when things get in the way of focussing on God.

*It seems incredible that after all that has happened, after seeing God so plainly at work, there are some who are still not focussing on him but are looking at themselves. Yet, we also so easily fall into this.*

1. List the things that you find distract you from focussing on God.
2. Say sorry for these now.
3. Ask God to help you keep focussed on him. Think about what this might mean practically (you may want to discuss this with someone or tell someone so that they can pray for you and ask you how you are doing with it).

**Day 3 – Focus for prayer**

*We are going to spend the next few days thinking about praying. Prayer is often something that believers struggle with. We are thinking about why that is the case and how amazing it is that we can pray.*

1. How often do you pray? What stops you praying more?

Read Matthew 6:9 – 15

*This is a well-known prayer and we are going to work through it a few verses at a time. (We could spend a lot longer on each line than we are!)*

Reread Matthew 6:9

1. Who are we to pray to? Think of what the perfect father would be like. No human father will be these, but God is our good and perfect heavenly father who is all this and more.
2. Think about the different emotions that you feel at different times and how a good father responds. How does God respond and feel when we are going through different emotions?
3. Where is God described as being? How does this show that God differs from human fathers?
4. When we come to God, what is the first thing we should do? (You might need to ask what hallowed means!)

Read Matthew 9:10

1. Once we have looked to who God is and praised Him for who He is, what are the next things we should be praying for?

*Praying for God’s kingdom to come and his will to be done helps us to focus our eyes upwards and so when we get to asking, we are looking in the right direction rather than at ourselves. Why not try praying Matthew 6:9-10 in your own words.*

**Day 4 – A God to ask**

*Yesterday, we were thinking about who we are praying to and where our prayers should start, with an upward focus. We now think about what we should be asking God for ourselves.*

Read Matthew 6:9 – 15. Reread Matthew 6:11 – 13.

1. What is the first thing we are to ask for?
2. What is this representing?
3. Are we praying for necessity or luxury? Does God always just give what we need or does He sometimes generously give much, much more?
4. How do we respond when He gives what we need but not what we want?
5. How often are we to ask for it?
6. Why are we to ask daily and not ask for loads at once and then not ask again for a while?
7. As well as praying for our physical needs, what is the other important things we are to pray for?
8. Why is it crucial that we regularly pray for our debts to be forgiven?
9. Why do we need to pray to God for Him to keep us from temptation? [How do we do with ignoring temptation by ourselves?]
10. Spend some time praying through each line of v.11 – 13 and thinking about how different they are from the prayers we sometimes pray.

**Day 5 – Do we know forgiveness?**

Read Matthew 6:9 – 13

1. Pray through the Lord’s prayer again in your own words.

Read Matthew 6:14 – 15

1. Why are these verses needed given what v.12 says?

Read Matthew 18:21 – 35

1. What is the point of this parable that Jesus tells?

*God knows that we can focus on ourselves, forget what we have been forgiven and so be slow to forgive others. If we understand what Jesus has forgiven us, then we will forgive others.*

1. Spend some time thinking about how you have rejected God as rightful ruler.
2. Spend some time saying sorry to God for rejecting him and asking for his forgiveness.
3. Spend some time saying sorry for the times when you have not forgiven others.
4. Think about whether there is anyone that you are still harbouring a grudge against or have not truly forgiven for something. Why not forgive them now? Why not tell them?

Read 1 John 1:8 – 9

*Be assured that God has forgiven you. Be confident that you are His child. Be encouraged that God has given you a new heart and His Spirit to change you. Thank God for these things.*

**Day 6 – What to pray (1)**

*I love the Lord’s prayer. I find it helpful to help me think through what to pray and to help get my priorities right. But when I am praying for other people, I often struggle to know what to pray for them. Over the next couple of days, we are going to look at some examples of Paul’s prayers to help us think about how we can pray for others (and it challenges my thinking and praying!).*

Read Colossians 3:1 – 8

1. What is the first thing that comes to Paul’s mind when he prays for the Colossians?
2. Why is he thankful for them?
3. How often do we thank God for the faith and love that others have (especially those who have shown us such love)?

Read Colossians 1:9 – 14

1. Does Paul pray for the Colossians regularly or just when there is a specific need?
2. List the things that Paul prays for these Colossians.
3. How many of these are to do with their physical needs?
4. How does this challenge the way that we go about praying (Note: there is nothing wrong with praying for the physical needs of others but, if you are like me, then it is easy to pray for those and neglect to pray for them growing in their faith).
5. Spend some time praying along the lines of v.9 – 12 for other believers.

**Day 7 – What to pray (2)**

*We are looking at another of Paul’s prayers for others today. There are some similarities to yesterday (so it will be a good reminder) but also some new things to learn.*

Read Ephesians 3:16 – 19

1. What does Paul pray for the Ephesians?
2. Why might they need to be strengthened? (It is the same as why all of us living for Jesus need this prayer!)
3. Read v.18 and 19. This sounds like it is an ongoing prayer for the Ephesians – they will never know truly how amazing Christ’s love is this side of the new creation. Why is this an encouraging prayer to pray.

Read Ephesians 3:20 – 21

1. How is God’s power described in these verses?
2. How does that make you feel?
3. Reread v.21. Where are we to see God’s glory today?
4. How does it make you feel that we should see what God is doing and see His glory in the church?
5. How often do you pray for the church, its leaders, its members, for the gospel to be preached and heard, for the gospel to go out?
6. Spend some time praying now. Don’t rush on to the next thing – take time!