

Prayer Guide for New Student Outreach

When Nehemiah (a leader for God’s people in the Old Testament) heard of the decline of the people of Israel – their community and their structures - his heart was broken: I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven (Neh. 1:4). Nehemiah waited upon God in prayer for four months before springing into action. More than likely, he gathered a community to call out to God with him. And he went on to take bold steps of faith that led to the flourishing of God’s people.

Our lives are full of trauma from the pandemic, a racial reckoning, and many challenges in our families and those we love. Like Nehemiah, we need to bring our pain to the Lord and seek him for clarity and direction. Without a season of rest and prayer, we run the real danger of thinking we control ministry, which leads to burn out. Or, we slip into a kind of numbness where critical moments pass us by and we’re not tuned into what God’s doing. We need to be reminded that this is his work and his ministry--he wants to do the heavy lifting and invites us into how he is advancing his kingdom on campus. May God fill us with the same courage and faith as Nehemiah to take bold steps of faith.

Nehemiah and his community did four things:

1. **MUSICAL WORSHIP AND PRAYER.** Musical worship connects us to God’s goodness and character. Worship connects us to the truth and exposes lies we might be tempted to believe.

Examples of ways to create spaces of musical worship and prayer on campus:

1. Worship Playlist. Spend significant time in your prayer meetings worshipping God. Play worship music and sit silently together under its effect. Simply worshipping God is a form of prayer in itself.
 - i. Use the [InterVarsity Live worship playlist](#)
 - ii. Urbana Worship album ([on Spotify here](#))
2. Prayer Prompts
 - i. Pray through Scriptures about God’s character
 - ii. Pray for God to arrange for you to meet the right people on campus (“divine appointments”)
 - iii. Pray for dorms, communities, and departments you want to reach
 - iv. Pray for students to be open and ready
3. While worshipping God with music, take a campus map and lay a hand on each academic building, housing, social space, sports facility etc. Ask that God would be lifted up in those spaces.
4. Adapt these resources or add some of your own to make this work for your community.

“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...” - Nehemiah 1:5

2. **CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE.** These are two concepts from the bible for naming sin and turning away from it. As we practice acts of confession and repentance, we can free the Holy Spirit's presence to overflow. We often think of confession and repentance as an individual process, yet in scripture, God often deals with us collectively, as people groups and nations. We are asking for revival on this campus. What sins, historical and contemporary, are blocking this campus community from receiving God's favor in greater measure?

"I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you." - Nehemiah 1:6b

A suggested process for corporate confession and repentance on campus:

1. Look at the following list, which of these are true of your campus?
 - i. Pride
 - ii. Racism
 - iii. Selfishness
 - iv. Materialism
 - v. Violence
 - vi. Others to list

With your community, confess to God the sin of your campus community. Repent humbly of what God revealed to you. Stay away from judgements by recognizing your own participation in lies and repenting personally first.

2. Read the history of your campus. Check the website or other reference material. Identify and make note of what you have researched and what you see. Specifically, where do you see lies of the enemy, or strongholds at work? A stronghold, according to 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, is simply a collective mindset that is opposed to the gospel.

3. **FASTING.** Fasting is the emptying of ourselves for the filling of God. As we fast, we can dedicate hunger or emptiness to the desire for God to fill that space.

"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 1:4

Examples of ways to bring fasting to campus:

1. Fast as you are able. Fast from technology, media, distractions, unhealthy living patterns or other things. Fast from food. Ask God to guide your fast and tell you how to proceed.
2. Organize friends to fast for the campus in prayer over a designated time. Each person can take a day of the week to fast for campus.
3. Invite others who care about the campus to fast with you on a designated day. End the fast with a communal prayer meeting for the campus virtually or in person as appropriate.
4. Use fasting as a community discernment practice. As you fast together, invite God to speak. What is God revealing to your community?

4. **INTERCESSORY PRAYER.** An intercessor, like a mediator, stands “in the gap” between heaven and earth, praying until “it is on earth as it is in heaven” - Matthew 6:10. Nehemiah stands in the gap between God’s will for the people of Israel and their reality of earth.

Gather people to pray consistently for this campus, once a month or every other week. Run a prayer meeting physically or virtually. Be creative.

“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.” - Nehemiah 1:11a

Examples of ways to practice intercessory prayer:

1. Prayer Walk. Print out a map of campus, place it on the ground and walk around the map, asking God to surround this campus with His presence! Pray and intercede for everything you see: buildings, locations, people. Look for signs of the Kingdom: a motto that shares fidelity to truth, a kind gesture from one person to another, a significant amount of energy given over to the development of students. Thank God for all the signs of His presence – explicit and implicit! Praise Him that he is already there; before you ever begin ministering.
2. Practice [listening prayer](#), asking Jesus for his intentions for this campus. Ask God to give you a scriptural promise of what God intends to do. Pray with faith into that scripture and ask for faith if you do not have it.
3. Gather your community. Together imagine and write out what it will be like for the students and faculty if the Kingdom of God came to campus. How would people treat each other? What would the values of campus be? Pray and ask God to bring it about.
4. Gather your community and draw a [network map](#). Pray blessings of God’s presence on these individuals. Call to God to come be present with them, increasing their faith, their joy, their vision of the gospel on campus. Ask God what new networks or campuses he’s calling you to. Ask him to open the doors to these networks and your existing ones through persons of peace--highly networked people who God uses to open networks (like Lydia in Acts 16). Keep track of what God says in this time.

More than just a prayer meeting, Nehemiah led a prayer effort. Months of focusing just on God and praying led to movements of God that eventually changed reality for the Israelites. May it be so for us and our campuses!