

Good novels have several key factors:

- **Central Character**
- **Clear Context**
- **Conflict, Crisis or Concern**
- **Conclusion or Resolution**

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Character—Nehemiah is a Jew, but serving as the cupbearer of the King of Persia in Susa.

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Context—Jerusalem is described as “...the walls are broken down and the gates are destroyed by fire.”

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Crisis—The broken walls of the city reflect the broken witness and will of God’s people.

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Conclusion—What had not been done in 70 years was accomplished in 52 days under Nehemiah’s leadership.

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⁴As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

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...⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.

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⁷We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

⁸Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,

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...⁹but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.

¹⁰They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.

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¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

—Nehemiah 1:4-11 ESV

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"In whatever man does without God must fail miserably or succeed more miserably." —George MacDonald

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Takeaway for Today: Prayer changes the landscape of our circumstances and enables us to see and seize opportunities God has placed before us.

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**1. Prayer is an essential ingredient
in all true spiritual progress.**

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**“Is prayer your steering wheel or
your spare tire?” —Corrie Ten Boom**

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**“Prayer is not so much an act as it is
an attitude—an attitude of dependency
upon God.” —Arthur Pink**

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**“Prayer does not fit us for the
greater work; it *is* the greater work.”
—Oswald Chambers**

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**2. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that
must be developed in each of us.**

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**“Reading a book about prayer,
listening to lectures and talking about
it is very good, but it won’t teach you
to pray. You get nothing without
exercise, without practice. I might
listen for a year to a professor of
music playing the most beautiful
music, but that won’t teach me to play
an instrument.” —Andrew Murray**

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3. Prayer is the personal expression of our absolute need for God to work in us, through us and for us.

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Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. —James 4:8a ESV

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When we “Draw near to God”...

Awe Replaces Arrogance and Anxiety

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Fasting = A way of showing humility

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God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. —James 4:6 ESV

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When we “Draw near to God”...

Confession Replaces Criticism and Concessions

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...⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.

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⁷We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

—Nehemiah 1:6-7 ESV

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When we “Draw near to God”...

Promises Replace Panic and Pressure

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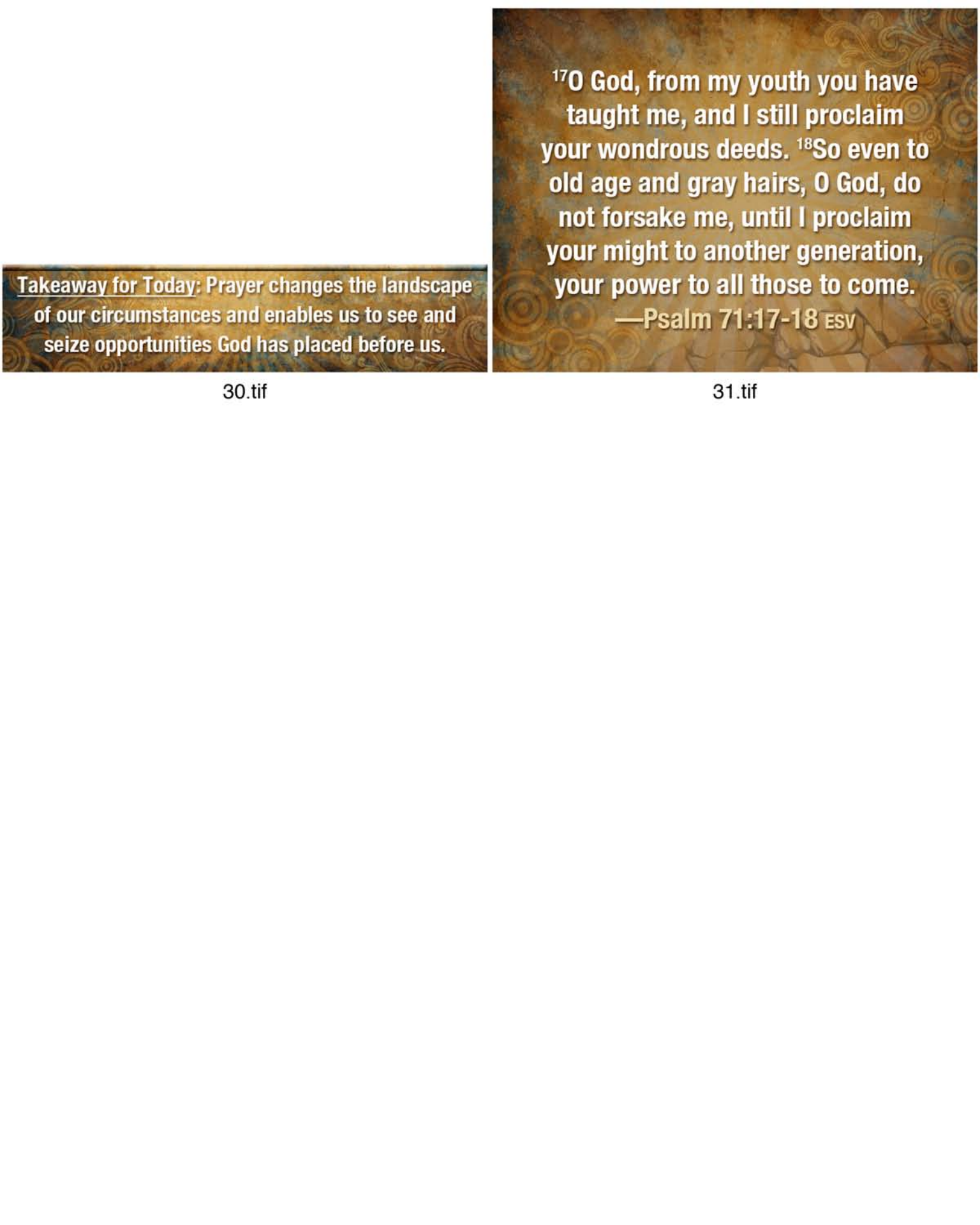
“Prayer is not merely prattle; it is warfare. Real prayer engages in a battle. Real prayer is rooted in the promises of God and in the covenant of the blood. We have the reasons given to us by God in His Word why He should answer, and we can read them there. That is why Nehemiah's prayer was answered: it was based on God's purposes and God's promises.” —Alan Redpath

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When we “Draw near to God”...

Surrender Replaces Self-Indulgence and Sympathy

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Takeaway for Today: Prayer changes the landscape of our circumstances and enables us to see and seize opportunities God has placed before us.

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¹⁷O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. ¹⁸So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

—Psalm 71:17-18 ESV

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