



The Key Ingredient.

I am a big fan of chocolate chip cookies. I may be biased but my very talented wife makes the best chocolate chip cookies on the planet. I peeked at her recipe book and found the dog eared, grease-stained, timeworn page that lists all the ingredients that made up these mouthwatering morsels. The main ingredient by measure is of course flour, but the key ingredient is the semi-sweet chocolate morsels. Without this key ingredient these delectable treats wouldn't even get a second look. (That is my expert opinion).

As I finished reading through the book of Nehemiah, I couldn't help but think about one of the main themes or ingredients that was key in his life and work as a servant of God. While we can garner an incredible amount of wisdom from Nehemiah's leadership and many accomplishments, the key ingredient that made me take a second, third and even fourth look was his commitment to prayer.

Found throughout the accounts of Nehemiah's story we find a variety of prayers; prayers filled with offerings of praise and thanksgiving, prayers of confession, petition, and blessing. It seems that no matter the time or place, the practice of prayer was a part of Nehemiah's life and leadership, something he modeled for the people of Jerusalem.

The opening words of Nehemiah begin with a prayer as do the closing words in chapter 13. These words and the many in between are clear evidence of Nehemiah's dependance on God to help him undertake the mission of rebuilding and rekindling the physical and spiritual condition of God's people and city of Jerusalem.

When we examine the life of Nehemiah through his actions, we can see that his motivation came from his complete trust in the Lord. The "main ingredient" in his life and faith was a trust that was proven repeatedly throughout the narrative of his story. The "key ingredient" to his faith and trust in God was renewed each and every day through his devotion to prayer. Nehemiah's success in life and mission came because he depended on God.

Nehemiah opens his first prayer with an incredible reminder of who God is, "the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments." These words continue to stand true for us today as they did when Nehemiah recorded them. This covenant of love God made with his people was magnified many years later through the incredible sacrifice of his one and only Son so that we could be saved from our sins. How great and awesome is that?

The loving relationship that we have with Jesus today continues to be the main ingredient of our faith. Christ lived and died for us; his love for us, his sacrifice is the foundation of our forgiveness and promise of an everlasting life in the presence of his father. Our God is an awesome God.

The key ingredient in faith and life in him is prayer. How often did Nehemiah get down on his knees and pray to God? How often do we get down on our knees and pray to the same great and awesome God? 1 John 5:14 is an assurance to those who believe in the name of the Son of God, it reads, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." It is my prayer that these words inspire you to draw closer to our great and awesome God in prayer today.