

**DOING THE WORK OF GOD**  
**Nehemiah 2-4**  
**6/19/16**

Last week we saw that Nehemiah was a man of prayer.

He deeply believed that God was present and that He governs the affairs of men.

Nehemiah believed that God answers prayer.

He prays 11 times in 13 chapters.

Nehemiah teaches us that before we proceed to do anything significant we should . . .

**1. Pray 1:4-11; 2:4; 4:4,9**

Prayer is essential in accomplishing God's work on earth.

We, like Nehemiah, should . . .

- Confess our sins
- Pray for wisdom and guidance
- Pray for favor with those in high places
- Pray for protection from those who would harm God's work and God's people

*We are to do more than pray, but we shouldn't do anything until we have prayed.*

**2. Plan 2:1 - 3:32**

*We are NOT to proceed and say, "God will work out the details."*

It is not biblical to just let go and let God.

**a. Realistically estimate the amount of time it will take. 2:5-6**

**b. Anticipate potential obstacles. 2:7**

**c. Acquire needed materials. 2:8**

**d. Have your plan before you present your vision. 2:11-16**

- To prevent opposition from organizing
- To be able answer questions that may arise
- To understand how to organize the project
  - ◆ Extent of the damage
  - ◆ Size of the project
  - ◆ Resources available
  - ◆ Where to set priorities
  - ◆ How to organize the people
- The key to Nehemiah's success was that he was faithful behind the scenes.
  - ◆ This is true of every successful person, whether in the business world or in Christian ministry.

- ◇ Do your homework.
- ◇ Do what you ought to do when nobody is looking.

**e. Recruit to a vision, not a job. 2:17**

- Nehemiah identified with the people. (We, us)
- He stressed the seriousness of the situation.
  - ◆ He was honest and realistic.
- He proposed a definite plan of action.
- He challenged them to be a part of achieving something important.
  - ◆ He didn't plead or threaten.
  - ◆ He didn't try to use guilt or appeal to his position of authority.

*Show people how they can make a significant difference.*

- ◆ Nursery, worship team, Awana, Sunday School, Church cleaning, Yard work

**f. Provide people with hope that the goal is reachable. 2:18**

Nehemiah shared his personal testimony of God's grace to assure them of God's favor on the project.

He didn't try to sugar coat it or tell them that the job would be easy.

- ◆ He did however give them hope and assure them that the goal was reachable.

**vv. 19-20** Notice that there will always be opposition!!

- ◆ Nehemiah kept his eyes focused on God.
- ◆ Nehemiah was not going to try to appease those who opposed God's work.
  - ◇ He wasn't going work together with those who were actively opposed to God's work.
  - ◇ He wasn't going to let them discourage him or stop him from pressing on.

**g. Divide the task into smaller definable responsibilities. 3:1-32**

- He divided and delegated the labor. ("Next to him"- 14 times)

**h. Use people in the area of their gifts and personal interests. 3:28-30**

- "Each in front of his own house"

**i. Use existing leadership when possible.**

- Nehemiah divided the work into family and city units 3:12,13,17,18,22,27

**j. Get everyone involved.**

- Priests, Levites, goldsmiths, perfumers, temple servants, merchants
- Both men and women v. 12
- Regardless of social standing
  - ◆ Leaders and officials should set the example. cf. 3:9,12,14,16-19

**k. Encourage people by acknowledging work well done. 3:20,27,30**

- Names of workers are recorded and special efforts are recognized.
  - ♦ Don't flatter nor manipulate.
  - ♦ Encourage!!!

### 3. **Press On**

#### **a. They encountered various kinds of opposition. 2:10, 19; 3:5; 4:1-21**

**2:19** They are mocked, despised, and slandered.

- ♦ They are falsely accused of rebelling against the king.
- ♦ Their motives are questioned.

**3:5** Some of their nobles did not support the work

- ♦ Lazy? Too good to dirty their hands?
- ♦ Some were aligned with God's enemies for the sake of personal gain? Cf 6:17-19

**4:1-3** They were mocked and demoralized

**4:7-8,11-12** Their enemies conspired to attack them

#### **b. They were tired, discouraged, and afraid. 4:10-12,14**

v. 10 The task is massive and discouraging

- ♦ They were tired.
- ♦ They had lost their vision and their confidence.

v. 12 Their friends and families members who had come in from the villages tried to dissuade them because of the danger.

v. 14 They were afraid.

- ♦ The enemies have terrified the people with the threat of a deadly night attack.

*The first thing Nehemiah does each time he faces opposition is to talk to God about it.*

#### **c. They prayed. 4:4-5, 9-10**

vv. 4-5 Nehemiah prayed when they were ridiculed

But how can we reconcile this prayer with Christ's telling us to pray for our enemies?

1. By opposing the Jews they were in reality opposing God.
2. God had already announced judgment on Israel's enemies. Nehemiah was praying according to God's will. Cf. Rom.12:3; Joshua 1:5
3. Nehemiah didn't take personal vengeance. He knew that vengeance belongs to God. cf Dt. 32:35; Rom. 12:19

v. 9 Nehemiah and the people prayed when they were conspired against.

*The first thing Nehemiah does each time he faces opposition is to talk to God about it.*

#### **d. They looked to God and pressed on. 4:13-14, 16-23**

v. 13 Nehemiah placed whole families together.

- ♦ Men will fight to the end to protect their families.

vv. 14,20 They relied on God.

e. God delivered them. 4:15 cf 2:18,20

#### 4. Truths That Matter

a. God is everywhere present and governs over the affairs of men.

b. We are to do more than pray, but we shouldn't do anything until we have prayed.

c. Planning is spiritual.

- We are NOT to simply proceed and say, "God will work it out. He will take care of the details."
  - ♦ Faith is not a substitute for careful planning and organization.
- God's work requires planning.
  - ♦ But we should submit our plans to God and let Him make changes and proceed on His time schedule.

d. Difficulties and opposition do NOT mean that we are outside of the will of God.

- *When you are doing God's will you should expect opposition.*
  - ♦ It is rarely otherwise.
- *God's people doing God's work can expect opposition and persecution.*

The Bible promises persecution.

**2 Timothy 3:12** Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Chuck Swindoll, Hand Me Another Brick, p. 69

"Anyone who steps into the arena of leadership must be prepared to pay a price. True leadership exacts a heavy toll on the whole person- and the more effective the leadership, the higher the price. Unpleasant though it may sound, you haven't really led until you have become familiar with the stinging barbs of criticism. Good leaders must have thick skin."

- ♦ Every leader needs to be able to handle criticism.
  - ◇ If you aren't getting criticized, chances are that you aren't getting anything accomplished.
  - ◇ If you are seeking the approval of people you will quickly become disappointed and disillusioned.
  - ◇ You will be consumed by self-pity.
- ♦ Face opposition in prayer.
- Pray, plan, and press on.