

When Working for the Lord - START WELL

How can I make a good start at a God-given job?

Analyze the Job (Neh. 2:12, 15-16)

1. Why do you think Nehemiah said nothing to those who would be doing the work until he had inspected the walls himself? What did he discover? Why inspect the walls at night?
2. Tell about a project you plunged into without a good understanding or plan of what needed to be done... what happened?

Enlist Others (Neh. 2:17-18a)

1. List or outline the points Nehemiah stresses in his address to persuade them to undertake the task?
2. What general “argument” does he follow in enlisting others... one that we can apply when enlisting others for a ministry?
3. How significant is Nehemiah’s use of the pronoun “we” in v. 17?

Make a Commitment (Neh. 2:18b)

1. What are the two parts of “commitment” you see in v. 18b?
2. Give an example of the last time you not only verbally agreed to do something but also took action to support your commitment.

Have Confidence in God (Neh. 2: 19-20)

1. What spiritual principle do we see in where Nehemiah places his trust even if he had lots of people available to do the job? How should it apply to us?

2. When is it hardest for you to act:
 - a) When your project lies in ruins?
 - b) When your workers are few?
 - c) When others mock you?
 - d) Other

3. Discuss how you can really know God has called you to a task or given you an assignment?

Organize for the Work (Neh. 3:1-2, 22-23)

1. How does it appear that assignments were given in order to *motivate* them to complete their specific tasks, vv. 22,23? What was the wisdom in doing this?

2. Which do you enjoy most, coming up with ideas or organizing the process to bring them to completion?

Summary: What were the key elements involved in Nehemiah's completion of the rebuilding of the wall? How do you see these principles in the design of LIFE Groups?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

Do you sense God applying this lesson to your life? How?

Understanding the Job

What should I do when God calls me to a task?

Learn What Is Needed (Neh. 1:1-4)

[Where is “home” for you? How long have you been away from your roots?]

1. How does Nehemiah respond to the report given about those in Jerusalem? Why do you suppose he was so moved?
2. What part does a “burden” play in God accomplishing what He desires to be done?
3. In this world of unlimited needs, what kind of things move you to a sense of urgency or passion... what needs do you feel deeply burdened by?
4. Share about a need God put on your heart . . . how did you respond?

Ask God for Help (Neh. 1:5 – 11)

1. What do you see of God's nature through Nehemiah's prayer? About man?
2. How did Nehemiah's understanding of God and man give spiritual direction to his prayer? Why is knowing “who God is” important to our prayer life?
3. Why must we ask God for help (John15:5)?
4. Was Nehemiah the only one praying over the problems of the people in Jerusalem? What value is there by including other Christians to pray in asking God for help?

Act Courageously in Faith (Neh. 2:1-8)

1. How significant was it that Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer and that he had a close relationship and ready access to the king (see Esther 4:11)?
2. How do you see Nehemiah watching for God to "open a door of opportunity"? And how do you see God "orchestrating" events to bring about His will for the Israelites? (Share any personal observations where you saw God orchestrating events to accomplish His will.)
3. What evidence do you see that demonstrates that Nehemiah acted courageously? What are some present day examples demonstrating courage on the part of Christians to accomplish God's will?
4. Nehemiah's prayer in v. 4 enlightens us to the depth of his faith by first addressing the King of kings! However, how do you picture that taking place in the presence of the pagan king? How might that relate to 1 Thessalonians 5:17? When or how have you practiced this?
5. Where do you (or we as a church body) need to act courageously to accomplish that which God has called us? How do you sense God would have you apply this lesson in your life?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer today?

What need would you care to share with others to pray about?

Where do you need courage and God's help this week?

Resolve Internal Problems

How can I help resolve internal problems that arise in doing God's work?

Recognize Valid Complaints (Neh. 5:1-6)

1. What is the basic problem and what is compounding this problem?

2. Specifically identify the grievances that the poorer Israelites had against some of their wealthier "brothers" that made Nehemiah so angry. (see Lev. 25:35-42) Why were these valid complaints? How might we distinguish a valid complaint from other complaints?

3. How do you suppose all this affects their common desire to finish the project to rebuild the wall?

Confront Wrongdoers (Neh. 5:7-9)

1. What is Nehemiah's *first* course of action; what does he do before he ever says anything? Considering v.6 do you suppose that was difficult to do?

2. Besides confronting the guilty ones for their wrong, what other warnings does he present in v. 9? Why were those warnings so significant then and for Christians today?

Urge Fairness (Neh. 5:10-11)

1. What would you say were the motives of the guilty parties? What should have been their attitude towards those less fortunate? What do you think was Nehemiah's motive in dealing with the situation?

2. Describe Nehemiah's constructive resolution for all parties involved.
3. Brainstorm: what are some helpful suggestions to keep in mind when confronting others?

Right the Wrongs (Neh. 5:12-13)

1. What is the response of the wrongdoers? What was the response of *all* the people and how significant was that? How do you suppose this affected their progress in "the main thing" i.e., rebuilding the wall?
2. Nehemiah shows us that loving God and others may require personal sacrifice. What privileges and rights have you had to give up in the past so that God's work could prosper? Are there privileges or rights that God might be asking you to give up so that His work may prosper today?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

Have you ever seen one person take advantage of another? What was your response? How might you desire God to help you change your response?

Is there a situation you would like to take to God in prayer today as a result of this lesson?

Overcome Opposition

How can I overcome opposition to the work God wants me to do?

Ignore Ridicule (Neh. 4:1-3, 6)

1. What weapons does Sanballat use against Nehemiah and his team?
2. Brainstorm some present-day enemies (outside the church) and weapons they use to try to stop Christians from accomplishing God-given tasks.
3. Even though they were ridiculed they didn't quit, rather the work continued strong. What kept them energized... what do you think it means that they worked with all of their "heart"?

Take Opposition Seriously (Neh. 4:7-9)

1. What effect does this opposition have on Nehemiah and the Israelites (vv. 4, 9)?
2. Can opposition be good for us? What positive effects might result on us as Christians when we face opposition... how should we respond to opposition?
3. Do you think Nehemiah believed prayer alone was not a substitute for our own efforts? Why or why not? Is there an example here for us to apply?

Counter Discouragement (Neh. 4:10-12, 14)

1. The next threat is from primarily internal, from within their own ranks - what is it?
2. How does Nehemiah encourage his people to persist? What does he want them to remember? How does he encourage care and support for one another?

3. Does it take courage to encourage? / Respond to the statement, "Courage is contagious, as is fear."

4. What are some ways to counter discouragement?

Prepare for Crises (Neh. 4:19-20)

1. The people were widely separated from one another. What system was set up to bring them together? What truth were they confidently trusting in as they came to aid of those in trouble?

2. What are some things our church is doing to "bring people together" and help overcome a sense of isolation and abandonment? To provide support and encouragement and trust in the one who will fight for us?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

How might you be discouraged today and in need of some support and encouragement?

Is there some opposition you could use prayer about?

Celebrate a Job Well Done

What should my response be when a job is finished?

Complete The Work (Neh. 6:15-16)

1. Share about a recent celebration in which you participated, e.g. b-party, job promotion, birth of a child, wedding, graduation, etc.
2. What lay in ruins for 140 years was rebuilt in 52 days and during the hottest and driest part of the year! How was this possible?
3. Put yourself in the shoes of the outside observer. What conclusions might you draw about Christians who have worked diligently to complete the job despite opposition?
4. What reasons could the Israelites have given for stopping the rebuilding of the walls? List reasons why many believers have stopped the task God has called them to do.

Dedicate the Finished Work (Neh. 12:27-30)

1. How did the people celebrate the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem?
2. Tell about a dedication service that you participated in the past. How was it like or unlike this dedication service? How did the celebration honor God?
3. What did the priests do to prepare for this event? What are some ways believers can prepare themselves for worship?

Celebrate With Joy (Neh. 12:31,38a, 40-41am 43)

1. Who else participated in this celebration?
2. What events make up the celebration?

3. What are the results of this God-given joy?
4. Write a headline and an introductory sentence for a local newspaper article reporting the celebration! (Be prepared to share at the end of class)

Continue The Momentum (Neh. 12:44-47)

1. What did the Israelites do do after celebrating the completion of the walls?
2. *"I've done my duty; now it is someone else's turn."* How can Christians avoid that mind-set and continue the momentum after completing a God-given task?
3. What part in the building project and/or celebration would you most likely fit?
4. How are you, like Ezra and Nehemiah, finding, developing and using your gifts to build God's kingdom?

Care and Prayer: How can we help one another through prayer?

What do you want to celebrate and thank God for today?

