

Digging Deeper: Small Group Lesson from Sunday, December 6, 2009

Getting to Know You

1. Who is the most famous person you have ever met? How did you feel in his/her presence?
2. Are you a good sales person?
3. Have you ever had to ask a powerful person a difficult question?

Nehemiah must have wrestled with some of these issues as he went before a very powerful king to request permission to return and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Getting into the Scriptures

1. Nehemiah's heart seems to be broken over the broken down walls and gates in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1: 3-4). What really breaks your heart?
2. Nehemiah felt that God's reputation lay in ruins along with the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2: 11-17). Are there things today that seem to damage the "reputation" of God? More penetratingly, is there anything in your life that damages God's reputation?
3. Nehemiah took action. He saw the need, prayed about it, and got involved. As you think about God's work, do you think that we need to be more like Nehemiah? Do you trust your church leadership enough to step up when they ask or are you skeptical?
4. Nehemiah talked pretty straight to the people (2:17-18). They had been living there for many years and had perhaps gotten used to the way things were. Maybe they had given up plans to rebuild the walls and chosen, instead, to live in fear of attack. Do you think Christians or the church could ever benefit from a "reality check"? What have we gotten used to that might grieve the heart of God? What are we settling for that is puny in comparison to what God has for us?
5. The obedience of the people leads to a miracle. They rebuild in 52 days, what was left undone for the previous 90 years! Read 6: 15-16, and don't forget, that much of the time of this rebuild, the people were under attack and worked often with a sword in one hand (4: 12-18). Is the day of God's miraculous help past? Why do we assume, from our human perspective, that God can't do today what he did then? Who are we to assume what God will do? Obedience is all it takes! They did as they were led and God worked mightily. Can we do the same? Why do answer as you have?

Practical Applications

1. Look around. Where is God at work and needing willing helpers? Pray and ask God to open a spot for you to volunteer your efforts there.
2. Look around, but look around as if you have never participated in our church before. What looks right? What looks wrong? What needs done? Who should do it? Can you envision yourself stepping up to these challenges?
3. At great personal risk, Nehemiah went before the king and asked to return and rebuild the walls (2: 1-9). Are you afraid? Most often, fear of the unknown is our biggest fear. Once we try, or experience something, we aren't afraid anymore. Step up, step out! It's worth the risk to obey God. Honestly ask him where He's leading and say "Yes!"

“Let Us Rebuild...”

Nehemiah 2:18

During Advent, stories of hope keep us going

Prayer and the Mission...Here is an incredible illustration. The mission almost stamped out!
God’s blessing and human obedience save the day.

587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Iraq) destroyed Jerusalem. [burned gates, walls of rubble]

Symbols of God’s blessing and favor (to all) were destroyed

In shame and ridicule, God’s people carried off [exile, POWs]

70 years later, Persia (Iran) overthrew Babylon.

Ezra petitioned to return to Jerusalem for the Temple rebuild, took 50,000

They completed the Temple, but not sustainable, walls in ruins

Reputation of God, so to speak, lay in ruins, people vulnerable to attack

People fell into frustration and division [Lunch Money]

90 years later, Temple still there, but walls and gates in ruin, people only a shell of what God intended. God’s mission still in grave danger

I. Nehemiah was [cupbearer] to the King (20th year of his reign)

Queen was likely Esther (Esther 4:14, in 3rd year of Xerxes reign)

(Nehemiah 1: 1-4, 2: 1-8)

- a. Position didn’t make him passive to the things of God
- b. Heart was open and broken for God’s mission
- c. He prayed about what to do
- d. He took action at great risk [sad, asked]

II. (Nehemiah 2:11-20a)

- a. Got involved, didn’t stand by and wonder
- b. Didn’t seek attention
- c. Determined to do what seemed impossible [90 years!]

III. (Nehemiah 2: 17)

- a. Gave the people a “Reality Check”
- b. Challenged them to step up
- c. V. 18 – reminded them that God had given the opportunity
- d. V. 18b – the people said, “Let us start rebuilding!”
 - i. Leaders first
 - ii. Everyone near where he lived (3:10, 3:23, 3:28-30)

IV. The Wall is Rebuilt

- a. In 52 days, the people did what couldn’t be done in the previous 90 years!
- b. The Mission of God would go on as God intended. His blessing and Obedience!

One Year Ago, almost to the day – “The New Day” announced, many of you (63) have been very faithful.

Over 120k pledged and over 40k in hand!

[disappointed a bit]

400k to handle “deferred maintenance issues”, Our walls are in ruins in some sense

This is what happens when we don’t give as we should

Needed things go undone

We must play “catch up” now, but we can do it.

Not just “the New Day”, this is a life/scriptural principle.

Retell Transformation Breakfast

Show Power Point Slides

Walked out with 15k, then 30k, then 40k pledged for a matching funds program to challenge the people of Shepherd Church.

Let’s revisit Nehemiah again, not just for “New Day” but for our own good and the good of the Mission of God.

Testimonies: Jen G., Jan E., Julie and kids

(5 sentences or so...block wall... “we feel called to action”)

Everyone can do something, great or small

Departmental projects required by Feb.

Cards, Bricks, Closing Song!

(From today on, every new dollar or new pledge will be calculated against the matching funds, until August 2010) We can turn 40k into 80k or more! Remember Nehemiah 2:18 “Let us start rebuilding!”

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I. Nehemiah was Cupbearer to the King (Nehemiah 1: 1-4, 2: 1-8)

- e. Position didn't make him _____ to the things of God
- f. Heart was _____ and _____ for God's mission
- g. He _____ about what to do
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