

Study Series: Nehemiah
ON BEING A CHURCH BUILDER
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BIBLE STUDY NOTES

Study 1: A GOOD HEART FOR GOD AND HIS WORK

There is a need to take stock of the situation

Foundation principles in the work of God:-

1. CONCERN

“The work of God is paralysed
people are demoralised”
(David Jackman)

2. PRAYER

Review: trouble and disgrace (v 3)
Response: confession (vs 6 & 7)
covenant (v 8)
conviction (v 9)
Request: honour your name (v 11)
here I am (v 11b)

3. DEDICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

A faithful servant of the king
encouraged by provisions

A faithful servant of the King of kings
encouraged by providence

Study 2: GETTING THE WORK STARTED
Nehemiah Ch 2 vs 11-20

The scene changes to Jerusalem. Note how a good leader sets about the task against a background of deep curiosity, even suspicion (v 16)

1. EVALUATION (v 13f)

Shared with some trusted friends by night (vs 13, 15)

****the importance of proper evaluation and not being a solo player***

2. VISION (v 17)

Shared more widely "you see the trouble we are in" (v 17)

- the vision is God given (v 12)
- the vision is people driven (v 16)

****always true that without vision the people perish***

3. TESTIMONY

To God's Grace and providential involvement (v 18a)
People becoming motivated (v 18b)

****do we share enough God's gracious providential care for us? Not focused on the rubble but on what God has already done!***

4. CONFIDENCE

Nehemiah's confidence in God is infectious and his confidence in God's people to respond is encouraging (vs 18b, 20)

****Nehemiah's confidence in God was informed by Scripture and observation of how He blesses those who seek to obey Him according to His promise.***

5. OPPOSITION GROWS

Formidable opposition from outside the church (Gesham) but also from the fringes of the church too (Tobiah)

****Nehemiah was not thrown by opposition, nor surprised but it. Nor should we be!***

Study 3: THE FAMILY OF GOD AT WORK
(Nehemiah Ch 3)

The importance of a list of names in Scripture. Individuals who serve God may be forgotten by secular history but not by God!

There are four key principles in this chapter:

1. **Not all work is equally distributed** but all workers are equally responsible (some had more to do than others vs 12, 20)
2. **Not all the work is equally pleasant** but all the work is equally important. The wall is as strong as the weakest link. 'Dung Gate' v 14! Some only want the limelight!
3. **Not all workers are equally gifted** but all are equally valuable (v 8). Goldsmiths & Perfume-Makers – some willing to get their hands dirty and discover other gifts!
4. **Not all workers are equally enthusiastic** (cf20) but all is as local as it could be (v 28). To serve God and do His work is in the best interests of our family.

**An amazing family; old, young, skilled, not so skilled (but all with a part to play). Up-front people, and behind-the-scenes people. The place of barriers broken down. 'Another brick in the wall' (Pink Floyd) cf living stones being built into a spiritual house' (1 Peter 2 v 5). God has a part for us to play and a job for us to do!*

Study 4: GETTING THE WORK COMPLETED
Nehemiah Chs 4, 5 6

The scene changes again – compare Ch 4 v 6 with Ch 6 v 15. Here is a strategy for finishing the work! This is probably where most of our parishes are at – good things done but more to do. Work can start enthusiastically but suffer from middle age half way through!

Notice how OPPOSITION mounts as the people of God set about the task; this should not surprise us.

1. FROM OUTSIDE:

- Opposition from without
- ridicule (Ch 4 v 3)
 - physical threat (Ch 4 v 8)
 - negotiation (Ch 6 v 2)

2. FROM INSIDE

- Tiredness from the work
- weary from well doing (Ch 4 v 10)
 - the effects of psychological warfare

3. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Famine....Usury....Slavery (Ch 5 vs 3,5,8) cf Lev Ch 25

- People's reactions:
- fear, church suffers from loss of nerve
 - problems too great
 - what about me

If a job is to be done, there needs to be three key ingredients:

1. PRAYER

Nehemiah was a 'leader from the knees up' (Charles Swindoll)

He prayed on his own, the people of God prayed too (v4, v9)

2. PARTNERSHIP

Ch 4 v 6 the people 'had a mind to work' (NRSV) cf Ch 3. It was an impossible job and would have been an incompleting vision, unless each played their part:

- pulled together
- prepared
- planned
- played to their strengths
- pliable, willing to be led

****They kept at it, they were watchful, they were committed to the fellowship (vs 9,20)***

3. PERSPECTIVE

Above all they had a clear view of God kept before them (Ch 4 v 14b & Ch 6 v16)

****Nehemiah is always saying 'keep your eyes on God. He is bigger than your problems. See what He has done and what He will help you to do!' That's what we need to do too!***

Study 5: THE WALLS OF NO USE WITHOUT THE WORD
Nehemiah Ch 8

“The Spirit of God taking the Word of God and creating the Community of God.” (David Jackman). Here is a wonderful glimpse of a reconstituted community around the Word of God.

The ‘Watergate’ experience that built and not destroyed! Public access to the reading and explaining of the Word of God! The church outside in the marker place! The church revived!

There are four marks of the Church in this chapter:

- 1. The Church gathered around and eager to hear the Word of God**
Cf Deut Ch 4 v 10 (Horeb) Neh 8 vs 1,3,5,7,9
- 2. The Church with the highest possible regard for Scripture**
Ch 8 v 14 God had spoken through Moses
- 3. The Church with a need for faithful preachers**
Ch 8 v 8
- 4. The Church discovering that obedience to the Word of God brings joy**
Ch 8 v 17

Obstacles to this happening in the Church:

- 1. A lack of conviction about the complete trustworthiness of ‘God’s Word written’**
Ch 8 v 14
- 2. An impatience with serious and diligent study**
Ch 8 v 13
- 3. An unwillingness to be holy (different and distinct) as God’s people**
Ch 9 v 2
- 4. A hesitancy about letting the Word of God challenge our traditions and radically alter our practice.** Remember, some traditions are helpful, but unhelpful traditions can be five years old as well as fifty or more!
Ch 9 v 2, 3

****I hope you catch the vision to pray and work for the Church to be like it is in Nehemiah 8.***

**** Remember how easily we slip away from best practice and how merciful God is.***