

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD-

NEHEMIAH

Review:

Last time: When you find yourself in a negative situation

1. Nehemiah became burdened not just frustrated.
2. He took his burden to God.
3. He made himself available for God to use.
4. He devised a specific plan to make a difference.

Introduction:

We want to look at the particulars to Nehemiah's plan to make a difference for God.

I believe each one of us wants to make a difference with our lives. What steps can we take so we are making a difference not just for our kingdom but God's kingdom?

- I. Move in God's timing and not just our own.
 - A. Nehemiah 2:11 says Nehemiah waited three days when he arrived in Jerusalem.
 - B. Sometimes it is easy to be so excited to do something, we forget to get adequately prepared before we begin. It's not about just getting the task done, but the process is just as important. Do you think it is possible to complete the task & not have God be pleased? Why? Because we didn't do it God's way or with the right motive.
(Colossians 3:23)
 - C. Nehemiah examines the condition of the walls.
 1. 2:12: He takes a few men with him and examines the condition of the walls.
(2:13,15)
 2. Why was this an important step? Proverbs 18:13 "He who answers before listening (gathering data), that is his folly and has shame."
 - D. He casts his vision with a few key leaders first. (2:17-18)
 1. The walls are in ruins – let's rebuild so we will no longer be in disgrace. He identifies himself with the people.
 2. He tells them about how God led & provided up to this point.
Why is this important? I reaffirm the vision. God is in this.
 - E. He prepares the people for opposition by pointing them to God who would give them success. (2:19-20)
 - F. Why is it so important that Nehemiah encourages them to look to God for success & not just the task?
It is easy for opposition to distract us if our eyes are only on the task. God is the one who ultimately will bring victory.

- II. Motivate others to join with God.
 - A. Once Nehemiah has assessed the job, cast the vision to key leaders and got them to buy the vision of what God wants to do, he next needs to enlist help.
 - B. Why is it so important that Nehemiah didn't try to do this alone?
 - 1. The task was beyond one man.
 - 2. When others get involved in what God is doing, it impacts their lives as well.
 - C. Imagine the witness to the Gentiles as they saw people from all different walks of life: (priests, goldsmiths, fathers, daughters, (3:12), Levites), joining together for a common purpose.
 - D. There may be many things they couldn't agree on, but we need to learn to work together and focus on God & His kingdom and what we can agree on.
 - E. How important is it to the rebuilding of the wall that they all do a good job? If only one family does a lousy job, it defeats the integrity of the whole project. It's like a chain is only strongest at its weakest link.
 - F. Did you know that this is the way it is in the body of Christ? Each person impacts every other.
 - G. You may think that what you do or don't do doesn't make a difference, but it does. (tell story of student with mono at SEMP)
 - H. It is interesting to note that Nehemiah gives people extra motivation to do a good job because they are rebuilding the wall closest to where they live. (3:10)

III. Dealing with Opposition

- A. It is easy to start a project well. It is another to finish it well.
- B. The Israelites start to get opposition from some Gentiles who don't want them to succeed.
 - 1. They get angry at the Israelites. (4:1)
 - 2. They ridicule the Jews. Read 4:2.
 - 3. They try to get them to question their vision to completely rebuild the wall. Read 4:3.
 - 4. They try to distract them from building.
 - 5. When that didn't work, they threaten them (4:8) so the people are afraid. (4:14)
- C. The Response of Nehemiah
 - 1. 4:4 – He prays for God's protection and doesn't directly address the critics. The people respond by continuing to build with all their hearts (4:6) and get the wall to half its height.
 - 2. When the threat becomes violent, Nehemiah prays for protection and posts a guard day & night. (4:9) At this point, the people are getting physically tired & starting to lose their vision. They are getting afraid. (4:10-12)

3. Nehemiah posts even more guards & also recasts the vision, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great & awesome, and fight for your families.” (4:14) “Our God will fight for us.”
As a result, the people return to the wall and keep doing their work. (4:15)
 4. Satan loves when he can discourage us and distract us from what God has called us to. He loves it when He can get us to lose our vision & stop. What does it take for you to give up & quit?
- D. Faith and works
1. Nehemiah says that “God will fight for them” (4:20), and yet he has half of the workers holding spears as the other half build and the builders have swords strapped to their sides. (4:21, 18)
 2. So which is it? Will God fight for them or do they need to fight? Is this a lack of faith?
 3. They looked to God to do His part, but they also did their part.
 4. This isn’t a lack of faith; this is faith in action.
 5. The order is important. If God doesn’t move, it doesn’t matter what they do. But God might see fit to rescue them through their efforts.

Conclusion:

Do you believe God wants to work in you and through you to make a difference for His kingdom? What burden has He placed in your life? Who are the people in your sphere of influence? How has God gifted you?

What vision do you have of what He wants to do through you?

We know that God wants us to win people to Christ. He wants us to help people grow in Christ, but how has He uniquely positioned you to answer the call?

What do you love to do? (tell story of lady who loved birthdays so she hosted birthdays for all the single men in her neighborhood)

Once you have a burden & a vision, enlist others and step out and do it.

Beware. There may be some obstacles, but keep your eyes on pleasing God and see what He will do.

Nehemiah 6:15-16

“So the wall was completed in 52 days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.”

Small group questions:

1. Can you think of a time when you were doing something you felt like God wanted you to do, and you faced opposition? What did you do?
2. Why is it so important to see God in the midst of what you are doing?

Would you say you typically see God in the ins & outs of your life? Why/why not?

3. What do you love to do? Can you see a way that God could use that for His glory?

4. Why is it important that we don't try to serve God alone? Who do you partner with in your walk with God?

5. God always does His part. The question is are we acting in faith and doing our part?

What is one thing you think God wants you to do from this lesson?