
MAY 12 2024

THE WAY GOD GETS THINGS DONE

Building a testimony for the Lord.

Nehemiah 7.4-5
Nehemiah 11.1-2
Nehemiah 12.27-47

A Perpetual Dilemma—

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9.37)

- God and Nehemiah had a dilemma: Jerusalem, the place chosen by God for the honor and representation of His Name, was underpopulated. Four hundred years later, Jesus faced the same dilemma; 2,400 years after Nehemiah, the problem still persists: God’s mission is understaffed and under-supported.

A Divine Solution—

Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt. So my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. (7.4-5)

- When Jesus saw the dilemma, he told his disciples to pray. This is an unchanging truth which we have seen in Nehemiah: those who understand the mission of God are people who are praying about the problems which prevent God's work from moving forward.

- God gave Nehemiah a two-step solution:
 - (1) Check the records: who returned from exile and where were they living?
 - (2) A lottery to choose one-tenth of the people to relocate to Jerusalem.

Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten of them to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. (11.1)

- There are three important truths here for us to recognize:
 - (1) Relocation was costly! It meant uprooting families, selling homes and businesses, and moving to a city that, inside the walls, looked like West Baltimore!

The willingness to do so revealed a complete surrender to the mission of God.

Which is what Jesus said: "In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

(Luke 14.33)

(2) It didn't require everyone to relocate, but it did require everyone to be willing.

(3) The sacrifice was not overlooked, minimized, or taken for granted:

The people commended all who volunteered to live in Jerusalem. (11.2)

*The degree to which we recognize, honor, and appreciate
the work and sacrifices of those
who give themselves to the mission of God
reveals the value that we place on the work of God.*

It is also deeply Christ-like.

*“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones
who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose
their reward.” (Matthew 10.42)*

The way God wants things done—

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace . . . [therefore] be sure that everything is done properly and in order. (1 Corinthians 14.22, 40)

- There are two practical adages that most certainly originated from Biblical truth:

“A place for everything and everything in its place.”

“Anything worth doing is worth doing right.”

- Like so many other places in the Bible, Nehemiah includes multiple, detailed lists of people. We might be tempted to skip over reading them or to see them as irrelevant, but they reveal critical and *eternal* truths:
 - ▶ God sees every person and everything each person does.
 - ▶ God makes a record of all who serve His work, no matter how insignificant their role may seem to be.
 - ▶ God will reward everyone according to what they have done.

- Nehemiah's lists also emphasize another important truth in the New Testament:
 - ▶ Everyone has a place and a role in the mission of God.

The question each of us must answer is:

Am I where I am supposed to be
and doing the work I am supposed to be doing
to further the mission of God?

- Nehemiah's ministry organizational lists include:
 - ▶ Security teams (11.6, 8, 14)
 - ▶ Ministry personnel (11.12)
 - ▶ Maintenance personnel (11.16)
 - ▶ Worship and prayer leaders (11.17)
 - ▶ Choir leader (11.22-23, 42)
 - ▶ Ushers (11.19; 12.25)
 - ▶ Singers/choirs (11.23; 12.28-29, 31, 40)
 - ▶ Musicians (12.35, 41)

- This is more, however, than just Nehemiah's organizational chart:
This is the schematic "prescribed by David, the man of God" (12.24; also 36, 46) when God had given David detailed instructions for the ministry of the Temple (1 Chronicles 23.2-5; 2 Chronicles 8.14).
- Nehemiah was rebuilding the ministry of God according to the standard that God had prescribed. This brings us back to the second adage: "Anything worth doing is worth doing right."

- The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon, so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Timothy 3.14-15)

- There are standards in the New Testament for the content and order of our services and sermons, and tragically, much of what is done today in church is unacceptable to God according to the standards of Scripture.

Worthy celebration!

For the dedication of the new wall of Jerusalem . . . (12.27)

- It might have been old rubble, but it was now a “new wall”—and it was reason for a major celebration!

So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God. (6.15-16)

- God's prophetic intention, spoken hundreds of years earlier through Isaiah and Jeremiah, had now been accomplished—
"for the people worked with all their heart." (4.6)
- This moment was the outcome of vision, sacrifice, commitment, and perseverance. The people celebrated as commanded in Deuteronomy 12 and the result was that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away" (12.43).

- There are several questions that we must ask ourselves:
 - ▶ God wants His mission to move forward, so what are we doing?
 - ▶ What have we done as a result of working together with all our heart that is a tangible accomplishment worthy of great celebration?
 - ▶ What have we endeavored to do for God that has caused the community around us to notice?

The heart desire of Jesus—

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17.22-23)

- Nothing is more critical to the success of God's mission and nothing is more important to the Head of the Church than unity and oneness of heart. Likewise, nothing is more important to the adversary than hindering unity and forming division. The revelation of Jesus to the world depends on our oneness of heart and purpose.

- Out of the rubble of disgrace and disunity, the wall was built, enemies were frightened, and God was glorified before people near and far away.
- Wherever there is unity, the mission of God is moving forward—and it is plain to see! Wherever there is little advancement of the kingdom, you will find a lack of oneness of heart and mind among God's people.

- The emphasis of unity is a central detail in Nehemiah's account:
 - ▶ the people commended **everyone** who volunteered to live in Jerusalem (11.2)
 - ▶ **everyone** participated in the celebration (12.43)
 - ▶ **all** the people of Judah took joy in the priests and the Levites and their work (12.44)
 - ▶ **all** Israel brought a daily supply of food for the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Levites (12.4.7)

- In surrendering their agendas and uniting around the prophetic mission of God, the people had fulfilled even more Scripture:

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

*For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore. (Psalm 133.1, 3)*

- No one was too busy to do the work of the Lord because the work of the Lord was their priority and joy.