

Highly Effective Building

Nehemiah 2:1-3:5

Nehemiah achieved something remarkable: the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in just 52 days. How he achieved that has lots to teach us about how we can be fruitful and effective in our lives.

He Prays

When you are a 'doing' person, prayer can seem frustrating, or a waste of time. Nehemiah prayed for 3-4 months, waiting for God. He knew that unless God 'builds the house, its builders labour in vain.' So, whilst Nehemiah could have manipulated things with the king, if God was behind this project, he was happy to wait in prayer for God's timing.

But Nehemiah also responds to the urgent – the king's questions – with prayer. He was afraid, and conquers his fear through prayer. To pray was his reflex response. He knew it was God who was in ultimate control.

He Plans

If we care about the state of society, the church or individual broken lives, we will seek to identify problems and find solutions. That is what Nehemiah did during his 4 months of praying. The letters he asked for from the king showed that he had planned and researched. And when he got to Jerusalem, he surveyed the walls in private, so that he had all the information he could. So Nehemiah prayed as if everything depended on God, and worked as if everything depended on him.

He Mobilises

Nehemiah took a defeated people and stirred them to action. He mobilised a city and the surrounding towns. He did this by identifying with them in the trouble they faced. He did it by inviting them to join with him. And he mobilised the people by having them rebuild the wall in sections, by families and trade groups. So, everyone could find a place to build. It is a picture of how all of us can join in building up the church.

He Stands Firm

Nehemiah was surrounded by opposition – from the world of politics, religion and profit. His opponents ridiculed the people and questioned their motives. If you care about God's glory and people you will face opposition. But it is better to have hell as your enemy, than for them to think you're not worth bothering with!

Nehemiah refused to bend because he knew where his confidence lay: in God.

Walking in His Steps

If we are to face our fears, and opposition, we need a confidence outside of ourselves. But we also need a humility that makes us willing to serve. Plus, we need a hope that tells us serving God's purposes is worth it.

The gospel, what Jesus has done for you, gives you these: it makes you both resolute and humble, and it gives you the hope you need – resurrection hope – that tells you God brings life from the dead, that your work for God is worth it, no matter what others say.

