

INTRODUCTION

In the book of Nehemiah, God is doing a great work in the lives of his people. They are facing a challenging project and together they accomplish it to the glory of God. Right here at Green Acres Baptist Church through Discover the Joy we are facing the greatest challenge in the history of our church. And with God's grace and God's power it also will be accomplished.

Last week we looked at chapter 1 and talked about how Nehemiah agonized in prayer. We talked about the importance of praying and fasting to seek God's face and how Nehemiah began to organize a plan. God gave him a plan on how to accomplish his goal. Today we are going to be looking at chapter 2. This is an expansion of what happened as he began to develop the plan God placed in his heart. Today I am going to talk about five steps to success. Before we begin, look at the conclusion of the chapter, Nehemiah 2:20. "The God of heaven will give us success." If you would like to make that same kind of statement, the God of heaven is going to give us success. So how do you arrive at that point?

I. WHEN YOU ARE BURDENED, KEEP PRAYING

"In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; so the king asked me, 'Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.' I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, 'May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?'" (vs. 1-3) For four months, Nehemiah had been praying and fasting and fasting and praying. He was carrying such heavy burden that even when someone looked at his face they noticed he was carrying a heavy burden.

I am going to ask you to pray and fast and keep praying and keep fasting until God places a burden on your heart. Then when God places a burden on your heart you keep on praying. You keep on praying. This past week we started 60 days of prayer and fasting. We started 60 days of devotionals in the Discover the Joy devotional book. I have already had so many people tell me they're receiving a blessing from those devotionals. We started this past week on Tuesday mornings, 6:30-7:30 a.m., praying in the chapel and we are going to do it every Tuesday morning. You can come for the whole time or you can drop in for part of the time. We are serious about praying and fasting and seeking God's face. That is where it all starts. I know there are some of you right now whom God has placed a burden on your heart. What's the burden? The walls are broken down, the walls of morality in America and the walls of decency. There are walls in marriages that are broken down. There are people whose lives are described as being broken down. Has God placed a burden on your heart? If he has not you keep praying until you have a burden. Then pray after you have had a burden.

II. WHEN YOU SPEAK TO THE KING, ASK BOLDLY

Artaxerxes was the king. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (Proverbs 21:1) Let us read how Nehemiah asks the king boldly. "The king said to me, 'What is it you want?' Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I

answered the king, ‘If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.’ Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, ‘How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?’ It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.” (vs. 4-6) Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven. He prayed to the King of kings. Have you ever prayed while you were talking and you talked while you were praying? You know you can do that at the same time. I do it all the time while I am preaching. Nehemiah made a bold request by asking for a leave of absence. Last week I told you how it is important for us to organize an orderly plan. God is not the author of confusion. Some people say when you have something like the Discover the Joy, that type of emphasis we are usurping God, because we should just trust God do not make any plans. No, you miss God if you do not plan. That was part of Nehemiah’s plan. How long is it going to take? Set a time. Answer all the questions.

“I also said to him, ‘If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king’s forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?’” And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. (vs.7-8) Because Nehemiah had been speaking to the King of Kings, and the King of Kings’ hand was on him, the earthly king granted his requests.

“So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king’s letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me. When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.” (vs. 9-10) We are going to see when God’s people start doing a great work there always opposition.

What was Nehemiah doing? When you speak to the King, ask boldly. Nehemiah had already thought about what he was going to ask for four months. He had been praying and fasting and fasting and praying looking for an opportunity. As a servant of the king, he could not initiate it. He had to wait until the king initiated it. He was so burdened that the king looked at Nehemiah and said, “Nehemiah, your heart is heavy. What can I do for you? How can I help you because you have been such a faithful employee?” Nehemiah was ready on the spot. He prayed to God, “God give me success.” And he relayed the problem to the king.

Talk about a bold request—and the king was honored by it. We do not have an earthly king, but we have a heavenly King. The principle holds true so there are three things you need to always ask of the king.

A. Ask for the King’s permission

“If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it.” (vs. 2:5) Never run ahead of God. Running ahead of God is just as dangerous as running behind God. In Discover the Joy process, ask God if He will you to be a part of what He is doing. Many of you in this church have taken Henry Blackaby study called *Experiencing God*. Many of you know what I am talking about

when you understand that the very first step in the Experiencing God process is God is always at work around us. When you understand that God is in the process of doing something great, the next step is that he invites us to join him in what he is doing. God is in the process of doing a great work right here in East Texas. The desire of all of our hearts should be to ask for the King's permission.

B. Ask for the King's protection

“May I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah?” (vs. 2:7) That is a wonderful prayer that you need to pray. The Bible talks about praying for a hedge of protection around your family. Throughout this process I am challenging you to pray for God's protection to be around you and around your family. Why? When you start getting serious about seeking God's face and being a part of what God is doing that is when you become a target for the devil. As long as you are a backslidden, cold, indifferent, complacent, and mediocre Christian, the devil's not going to mess with you. But about the time you start praying and fasting and seeking God's face and getting serious about following God, I promise you a huge bulls-eye is painted on your heart. If you are getting serious about God, you had better pray for God's protection around you and your family and this church. In the next few months this church is going to be under more satanic attack than ever before in our past. That does not discourage me, it encourages me.

C. Ask for the King's provision

“And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?” (Nehemiah 2:8) Talk about a bold request. I am talking about you asking the king. Some of you right now as you begin to think about and pray about what you are going to do for Discover the Joy and you don't see any way you can help, because you do not have any extra income or assets. You need to do exactly what Nehemiah did, just begin asking the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, “Father I want you to give to me so I can give away something that is so great that I can only say, ‘I did it through the power of God.’” Go ahead and ask God. Right now, every member of our church should be thinking about a figure in your head. That figure should be such that there is no human way you can do it. The only way you can do it is if the God of heaven provides for you supernaturally. You really should be thinking along those terms if you want to see God work.

III. WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER TROUBLE, LOOK FOR THE POSSIBILITIES

“I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet

I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.” (vs. 11-16)

The principle we are talking about here is that when you see trouble, look for the possibilities. Here is Nehemiah on a fact-finding mission and midnight reconnaissance of the wall. What he saw was desolation, devastation, and destruction, but as he looked at the fallen bricks and stones and burned gates, he saw something else. Instead of thinking how awful and terrible the destruction was and how they would succeed, he was looking and saying, “I think we can do that. I believe we can rebuild this wall. We can rebuild this gate.”

Let’s apply it to 1998. I challenge you to go on a fact-finding mission. Before you do anything, regarding Discover the Joy, get your facts straight. What are the facts? Here they are: God is blessing Green Acres Baptist Church. We have seen amazing numerical growth. I showed you several weeks ago that if we grow simply at the same rate we have grown in the last seven years, we will have almost 5,000 people in attendance at this church. That is a fact. Tyler is a strong, thriving, growing community. I think the best place to live in America is Tyler, Texas. There are a lot of other people that are going to learn about our city and more people, especially retirees, are going to start moving into Tyler. Those are the facts. Once you start gathering the facts, saying, “Yes, there is a need for us to build for this anticipated growth.” You are ready to do what Nehemiah did. You are ready to look at the possibilities.

Some of you can only see the ruined, broken-down walls. Some of you can only see the cost. Some of you can only see the inconvenience. It is going to be inconvenient the next few years: parking problems, mud, etc. Some of you can only see the hassle factor. When you look at the future all you can see is the problems but some of you, praise God, can see the possibilities. I see that building completed and see literally thousands of people coming to know Christ. I see God rebuilding the wall of decency, rebuilding the wall of morality, rebuilding the walls of families, and the walls of broken down hearts and hopes and homes. That is what I see. You will never be a part of what God is doing, until Nehemiah you do not look at the trouble. You look at the possibility.

IV. WHEN YOU FACE A CHALLENGE, INVOLVE OTHERS

Up to this point, it was only a vision in Nehemiah’s heart. He said I had not shared it with anyone. “Then I said to them, ‘You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.’ I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, ‘Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work.” (vs. 17-18) This is the main step I want to talk about today. These five principles will work for you if you are building a business, building a home, building a church, and building a life. When you face a challenge, involve others.

How did Nehemiah involve these other people? First he let them know the need. “We are in disgrace. We are living in ruins. God has been so good to us.” He talked about the gracious hand of God upon him. God has been good to you. He has been good to Green Acres Baptist Church

and because God has been good and gracious to us, it is time for us to gather together to face this challenge.

When you face a challenge you need to involve others. There is no way I can do it. There is no way the staff can do it. There is no way our deacons can do it. There is no way our Sunday school teachers can do it. It is going to take the involvement of just about every member of our church. I said just about, because we see from Nehemiah, and it is true in every church, there are always going to be some that do not participate. But it is going to take the involvement of just about every member. What is the challenge we face? The challenge we face is so much more than this but this is part of it.

A. Our challenge is to build for the future

The people in Jerusalem had become apathetic and complacent. They had become used to living in ruins. It was not until someone came along and said, “You cannot just think about where you are right now. We need to think about the future generations here in Jerusalem. We need to rebuild this wall. We need to beautify this place.” So they did it. We are not building for who we are and where we are right now. We are building for future generations. We will be guilty of spiritual nearsightedness unless we take a big bold step for God and build for future generations.

Not only are we building a sanctuary, we are building offices, fellowship hall space, a new media center and a multipurpose space. Two million dollars of this project is to renovate where we are today, to make this into a beautiful chapel where most of our weddings will be held; to transform this entire building behind us into a childrens’ building. Not just one wing, but the entire building. We are doing that because of future generations. We are building for growth because the gracious hand of God has been upon us.

B. Our challenge is to enlarge our mission base

Some will ask why we don’t take that money and give it to missions and apply it to people who really need it. Almost 40 years ago, Green Acres Baptist Church started as a neighborhood church. Unless the forerunners, those before us, had not had faith, it would still be a neighborhood church just giving a paltry amount to missions. But in early 1960s, they said, “Let’s build a bigger building.” Some said we didn’t need it and wanted to give that money to missions. But the church forged ahead and built it and the church grew. In the 1970s, the church said, “Let’s build a building where not only the spirit but body and soul can be developed in Family Life Center. And let’s build a Children’s building.” There were people who disagreed. As the church continued to grow, the base for missions kept enlarging. In the 1990s, the church said, “Let’s dedicate a building to student ministry.” Although it cost \$2.5 million dollars, the church decided to do it, that students, our young people, mattered to us and to the kingdom of God. As we continue to expand our base, there is more we can do in terms of missions. If the church had not taken bold steps in the past, it would still be a little neighborhood church probably with a budget of about \$300,000 dollars giving maybe \$50,000 dollars a year to missions. Because the church has continued to grow, last year we gave over \$1 million dollars to missions. That is all we are doing, we are building a bigger mission base so we can give more, so we can go more.

This is and will always remain a mission-minded church. Even though this emphasis we will not cease to love and give and go and pray for missions.

C. Our challenge is to avoid long-term debt

If Green Acres Baptist Church was strictly a business, we would go a bank and ask to borrow \$20 million. I called a local bank to see what it would be for this information. The prime rate is 8.5%. \$20 million over a 15-year term, our payments would be \$2.5 million per year. We would end up paying \$35 million. If we did it the way the business world does it, we would end up paying \$15 million in interest alone. That is not the way God's people do it. Read though the word of God and when there is a need in God's family, God's people come forward and give. We are not going to do it the way the world does it. I think it would be to the honor and the glory of God to do this project in a way to avoid long-term debt. I am not saying we will not have to borrow some money, some short-term construction financing or whatever there may be remaining. That may be something we have to borrow. The more we give up front, the more God can be glorified by avoiding long-term debt. That is why we are having Discover the Joy.

Coming home from Alabama we saw a V formation of geese. Have you noticed that one leg of that V is longer than the other? There have been studies on geese flight formations. The lead goose flaps furiously, because he is the one cutting through the air. His wingtips produce something called a wingtip vortex, which helps the geese behind him. That is why they line up in a V, for increased efficiency. But the lead goose does not fly up front all the time. He drops back and another goose takes his place. The geese in the V are always honking encouragement. An aeronautical engineer with NASA performed tests in a wind tunnel and determined that a flock of geese flying in a V could go 70% further than a single goose flying alone. Who taught them do to that? God did. And God is trying to say to us that one alone cannot do it. We need to line up together and encourage one another. Together it can be done.

“For we are God's fellow workers.” (1 Corinthians 3:9) I love that. We are laborers together, not only together here, but together with God. This project, this challenge we face, will never be accomplished alone or with a small group. Together we can do it.

V. WHEN YOU MEET OPPOSITION, TRUST GOD

“But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. ‘What is this you are doing?’ they asked. ‘Are you rebelling against the king?’ I answered them by saying, ‘The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.’” (vs. 19-20) Be ready. The door of opportunity always swings on the hinges of opposition. Just this past week I have gotten statements of opposition to Discover the Joy and this building program. I was worried before that, but when I saw them coming in, I was thrilled. Why? Because the devil does not mess with a church that does nothing. Anytime God's people start do a great work for God, the devil gets busy and starts doing a great wreck for God. Anytime God's people stand up and say, “Together we can do it,” the devil's crowd, unknowingly, are going to say, “Together we can stop it!”

Would you agree that there are people in this community who do not want there to be a great, growing, regional, Christ-exalting, Bible-preaching church right here in Tyler, Texas? We must be ready for opposition and **WHEN** it comes, not **IF** it comes, what do we do? We trust God. All I am asking you to do is pray. Are you fasting? Have you fasted a day this past week? If not it is not too late to start. Are you willing to spend time alone every day talking to God, simply speaking to the king asking for his protection, his permission and his provision? All I am asking you to do is to listen and then when God puts something on your heart, then you join the others in this great adventure. You can get involved, as it says in this text, in a great work for God.

OUTLINE

I. WHEN YOU ARE BURDENED, KEEP PRAYING

II. WHEN YOU SPEAK TO THE KING, ASK BOLDLY

Ask for the King's

A. Permission

B. Protection

C. Provision

III. WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER TROUBLE, LOOK FOR THE POSSIBILITIES

IV. WHEN YOU FACE A CHALLENGE, INVOLVE OTHERS

Our challenges:

A. Build for the future

B. Enlarge our mission base

C. Avoid long-term debt

V. WHEN YOU MEET OPPOSITION, TRUST GOD

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.



David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes