

Business Principles

As Taught By Nehemiah

E-Book



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1. HIS DESIRE (Nehemiah 1:1-11)

1.1. DESIRES BIRTHED OUT OF COMMITMENT (Nehemiah 1:1)

Desires that stir God's business men and women to action, find their source in delighting in the Lord.



Psalm 37:4 *"Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart."*

To "delight", is to find great pleasure and joy in the Lord, and in His presence. This produces His desires in us, which can become realities in our lives. So it was with Nehemiah - he desired what was the mind of the Lord, and he was fully committed to the Lord.



Nehemiah 1:1 *"The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah ..."*

The book opens with the title: "The words", which claims the writing to be the memoirs of Nehemiah. The way in which he shared his heart, shows him to be a man of God. The evil man's desires are expressed in vices (*Galatians 5:16-23*), while the spiritual man's desires are expressed in virtues (*Galatians 5:22-24*). Living in obedience to the Holy Spirit's instructions, develops the beauty of the character of Jesus in us, creating desires in us, to please the Lord in actions of faith and service.

1.2. DESIRES BIRTHED OUT OF COMMUNICATION (Nehemiah 1:2-3)

Nehemiah was sought out by his brother Hanani (*Nehemiah 7:2*), and he and his companions told about the conditions in Jerusalem, and its broken wall and burned gates. The news-carriers came in the month of Chislew (Nov-Dec) to the fortress at Shushan, the winter retreat of Persian monarchs.

Nehemiah was occupied in his high position of trust and honour. In verse 11 we read that he was the cup-bearer to the king. His position and reputation made him the most natural choice to receive news about Jerusalem. This report stirred desires in Nehemiah, as a believing Israelite, to become actively involved on behalf of God and the people He loved.

Communication causes realistic desires to be formulated into positive goals. The need to know is essential to serving. That is how God's business gets done.

1.3. DESIRES BIRTHED OUT OF CONCERN (Nehemiah 1:4)



Nehemiah 1:4 *"And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,"*

Nehemiah "heard", "sat down", "wept and mourned", "fasted and prayed". This describes his passion and concern.

When God's business men and women have their hearts filled with the Lord's compassion for the needs of others, through the desires impregnating them, they have already begun to work for God.

1.4. DESIRES BIRTHED OUT OF CONTRITION (Nehemiah 1:5-11)

From Nehemiah's prayer we learn that he had a contrite spirit.



Isaiah 57:15 *"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.""*

The meaning of the original word for "contrite", is "crushed".

Strong says "Lit. powder. Fig. contrite".

The contrite willingly submits to the destruction of that within him, which is not pleasing to the Lord. The action of the Holy Spirit is to revive and renew such a humble spirit. The contrite spirit is open to correction by the Holy Spirit, and is willing to confess what is below the Lord's standard. It is willing to crush what is not of Him.

This kind of spirit is yielded to the Holy Spirit, to be readjusted and repaired. Desires flowing out of a contrite

spirit are to the glory of God. Nehemiah's prayer is an explicit example of the prayer of a contrite heart.

1.4.1. PRAYS SEEING GOD AS SUPREME (Nehemiah 1:5)



Nehemiah 1:5 *"I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God ..."*

"God of heaven" was a favourite expression of Nehemiah. It was used in recognition of supreme majesty. He is above all others, He is the great and awesome God, and the Lord God, i.e. the God of covenant.

When God is turned to in His supremacy and sovereignty, the biggest problems shrink into insignificant smallness. The contrite spirit is not filled with self-sufficiency, but with dependency on God, who is sufficient.

1.4.2. PRAYS SPECIFYING GOD'S ANSWER STANDARDS (Nehemiah 1:5)



Nehemiah 1:5 *"... You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments,"*

Answers are not withheld from those practicing faithful love to God. They are certainly not withheld from those who keep covenant with God, by honouring and keeping His Word. The contrite spirit retains no rival to the Lord in devotion and obedience, and is therefore the recipient of

the Lord's mercy and grace. The contrite spirit can come to God with all outspokenness, and not be turned away.

1.4.3. PRAYS SATISFIED THAT PERSISTENCY SUCCEEDS (Nehemiah 1:6)



Nehemiah 1:6 "... which I pray before You now, day and night, ..."

Nehemiah began praying in Nov-Dec, and continued until Mar-April: four months (*Nehemiah 1:1 - Nehemiah 2:1*: Chislev to Nisan).

The contrite spirit does not know about naming a matter once before the Lord - it persists and prevails (*Luke 18:1*).

1.4.4. PRAYS STANDING IDENTIFIED WITH SINNERS (Nehemiah 1:6,7)



Nehemiah 1:6 "... Both my father's house and I have sinned."

The contrite spirit of intercession confesses in a corporate and a personal way, that sin has been committed against God. Sin is an affront to God, and deals corruptly against God (*Nehemiah 1:7*). The contrite spirit recognises disobedience to God's Word and command, and owns up to it, acclaiming God's holiness and righteous dealings.

1.4.5. PRAYS SPEAKING OUT WORD SATURATION (Nehemiah 1:8-10)



Nehemiah 1:8 *"Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, ..."*

The contrite spirit of Nehemiah was saturated in the Word of God, and this poured forth in his prayer life. The marginal references in any Bible, indicate this prayer to be Word-based (*Leviticus 26:39; Deuteronomy 4:29-31; 30:2-5; Exodus 32:11; Deuteronomy 9:29*). When the Word controls our lives and prayers, we prevail in prayer for others.

1.4.6. PRAYS SUBMITTING AS GOD'S SERVANT (Nehemiah 1:11)



Nehemiah 1:11 *"... let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man ..."*

The contrite spirit puts down self interest, and embracing the mind of God, gives itself to the interests of God and others. Nehemiah had the desire to serve God and his people. This desire, through prayer, developed to the point where he was ready to make his plan known to the king, Artaxerxes. Only God could move the heart of the king to release Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem. Nehemiah made his committal as servant, and trusted God to work out the details.

When the desires of God's business men and women are birthed out of their relationship with Him, they are granted

(*Psalm 37:4*). The successes of God's business people, springs out of godly character and open communication, personal concern and prayer commitment.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. What causes you to produce desires of the heart, so pleasing to God that He can give them to you?
2. Are you affected in what you desire, by the disposition of Jesus in you? (*Galatians 5:22-24*).
3. How essential is correct communication to your decision making? (*Nehemiah 1:2-3*).
4. Do you find little or no desire to get involved in a spiritual project, when only vague, emotional information is given?
5. What kind of need drives you to fasting and prayer? (*Nehemiah 1:4*).
6. Do you think God's business people need a contrite spirit? (*Isaiah 57:15*).
7. Do you think desires flowing from a contrite spirit will be granted by the Lord? Can you give some reasons?
8. In what way is the contrite spirit revealed in Nehemiah's prayer? (*Nehemiah 1:5-11*)

2. HIS DECORUM (Nehemiah 2:1)

2.1. PERSISTED IN HIS CALLING (Nehemiah 2:1)

God's businessman did not forsake his responsibilities, in accomplishing a burden put on him by the Lord. Rather, he used his position and means to further the Lord's aims. After four months of prayer, Nehemiah was serving faithfully in the king's court. Concerning a king's cup bearer, it needs to be understood:

"This officer, in the ancient oriental courts, was a person of rank and importance; and from the confidential nature of his duties and his frequent access to the royal presence, he possessed great influence." **Jamieson, Fausset and Brown**

Such men were involved in administration, treasury or other governmental duties, equipping them to be available for special assignments for the Lord. Persist in your specific calling - you are there for the Lord's purposes.

2.2. PERMITTED A SAD COUNTENANCE (Nehemiah 2:1-3)



Nehemiah 2:1 *"... Now I had never been sad in his presence before."*

Marked upon the face of Nehemiah, was the concern and

burden he felt. Such sadness was not permitted in the royal presence. Whether it was designed to get the king's attention, or accidental, it certainly succeeded so well, that the king's questioning response (*Nehemiah 2:2*) made him "dreadfully afraid." Even the countenance of God's business people, must be under their control when giving a presentation, or when requiring co-operation from someone. It is also necessary in witnessing to and counselling others.

Nehemiah quickly affirmed his loyalty to the king: "May the king live forever!" (*Nehemiah 2:3* NKJV). That, even an assassin could say, but there was a sincerity in the decorum of this man of God, that made the king willing to believe him. There should be a conviction about our words, that makes us convincing, because of character that backs them up.

Nehemiah is allowed to continue, and give his explanation.



Nehemiah 2:3 "... *Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?"*

By replying with a question he avoids becoming defensive. If he had tried to justify himself (as we often attempt to) he would have made things worse. Then the more he attempted to explain the cause of his sorrow, the less credible his story would sound. By answering the king as he did, Nehemiah avoided an unnecessary polarization and preserved the unity of their relationship - - - He is aware of the ancestral reverence which prevailed through the near

east. He therefore refers to the desecration of the graves of his forebears. He knows full well that this will arouse the sympathies of the king - - - It should be noted that at no time does Nehemiah mention the name of the city of his fathers.

This is not deceit; it is the judicious avoidance of a potentially volatile subject - - - Artaxerxes knows of Nehemiah's ethnic origin; and Nehemiah is wise enough not to prejudice his chances of success by stirring up unfavourable recollections in the mind of the king. **Dr Cyril J. Barber** - Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership

What a gripping lesson we are given by Nehemiah, in the wise use of questions, and how to approach others and effectively make our requests known. Like him, we need to develop correct decorum, so as to automatically act in the right way, even in emergency.

2.3. PRAYED FACING A CHALLENGE (Nehemiah 2:4)



Nehemiah 2:4 *"So I prayed to the God of heaven."*

Nehemiah's brief prayer was slipped in between the king's question, "What do you request?", and his answer. God prospered him in answer to his months of prayer, and gave him the opportunity he desired. He steadied himself with a short, silent prayer, so as to obtain all that was required to accomplish his service for God.

Nehemiah succeeded in his presentation, because he practiced his words in prayer to God first, before putting them to man. This shows the advantage God's business people have over others. They have the assistance of God in formulating strategy in the moment of challenge. Spiritual decorum is God first, then man. The Lord has promised us the help we need. Call in the moment of need, He will answer.



Matthew 10:19-20 *"But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. "*

2.4. PLANNED WITH RIGHT CHOICES (Nehemiah 2:5-9)

2.4.1. HE REQUESTED THAT HE BE COMMISSIONED (Nehemiah 2:5)

In his prayerful planning, Nehemiah had prepared himself thoroughly to answer the king's question: "What do you request?" (*Nehemiah 2:4 NKJV*). He requested that he be commissioned, (*Nehemiah 2:5*) as the building of the wall of Jerusalem had expressly been forbidden a few years earlier, until another commandment was given by the king (*Ezra 4:21*). It was necessary that the work be commanded, and for Nehemiah to be commissioned to do the work.

God's business people make sure that they obtain proper authorisation and full permission before starting on any project. This applies to practical and spiritual work. Work for God needs His commandment and commission.

2.4.2. HE REQUESTED THE TIME HE NEEDED (Nehemiah 2:6)

When the king asked how long it would take, and when he would return, Nehemiah had already estimated the time needed to complete the work.



Nehemiah 2:6 "... So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time."

That Nehemiah allowed himself sufficient time, is borne out by the fact he stayed there 12 years (*Nehemiah 5:14*). God's business people make careful assessments of the time required to accomplish a given task so that they do not get trapped in penalties for not finishing on time.

2.4.3. HE REQUESTED LETTERS GRANTING CONCESSIONS (Nehemiah 2:7-9)

These letters, to governors beyond the river, and to the keeper of the king's forest (royal preserves), gave Nehemiah authority, supplies and protection. Secure adequate concessions to accomplish the work assigned - ask and you shall receive (*Matthew 7:7*). We too can plan properly and make the right choices, when we open ourselves to having

the good hand of the Lord upon us through prayer
(*Nehemiah 2:8*).



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Are you faithful and available to the Lord where He has placed you? (*Nehemiah 2:1*)
2. Do you think it right, when godly desire fills you, to forsake your responsibilities? (*Nehemiah 2:1*) Are you using your position to further the Lord's aims?
3. Is it a characteristic of God's business people to keep control of their countenances? (*Nehemiah 2:1-3*).
4. Should kingdom people be encouraged to attain their full potential so as to maximise their impact for God?
5. What do you learn from Nehemiah that would help you in difficult and delicate negotiations?
6. Do you believe the best way to steady an answer is to silently pray? (*Nehemiah 2:4*).
7. Can God give you, at the time you need it, the right thing to say? (*Matthew 10:19-20*).
8. When facing an important interview, or decisions, do you prepare by going over the details with the Lord, in prayer? (*Nehemiah 1:4; 2:4*).
9. Desiring to be involved in a new project, do you obtain the necessary authorisation and permission? (*Nehemiah 2:5; Ezra 4:21*).
10. What do you learn from Nehemiah's requests of the king? (*Nehemiah 2:6- 9*).
11. Do you know what to do to open yourself to having the good hand of the Lord upon you?(*Nehemiah 2:8*)

3. HIS DISCRETION (Nehemiah 2:9 to 3:20)

3.1. IN OBTAINING OFFICIAL CO-OPERATION (Nehemiah 2:9-10)

Being a co-worker with God did not blind Nehemiah to the importance of co-operating with, and receiving the co-operation of other governors. Wise discretion is needed at peer level in interrelationships to get the job done. Two men, Sanballat and Tobiah, are mentioned in *Nehemiah 2*, who, in their personal and official capacities, were to prove themselves persistent enemies of Nehemiah and his work.

Ryrie comments: Sanballat (is) also mentioned in the elephantine papyri as governor of Samaria, he assessed Nehemiah's arrival as a threat to Samaria's control of Judah. Tobiah, probably an ex-slave, now governor of Ammon.

Discretion and discernment, as we shall see, enabled God's business people to see through all hindrances, and deal effectively with opposition. This principle, of discretion and co-operation with others, remains sound when faced with hinderers. Where there is great opportunity, there is usually great opposition (*1 Corinthians 16:8-9*). That being so, we should endeavour to maximise co-operation, that we may abound in the opportunity.

3.2. IN INSPECTION OF THE CITY (Nehemiah 2:11-16)

On his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah took three days for assessment (*Nehemiah 2:11*). He would spend time waiting on God, but a large part of the time would be used in weighing up the people and leadership potential, keeping in mind the work to be done. Time is never wasted in discerning the abilities of those who are to be involved in kingdom work. Choosing the hours of the night, Nehemiah inspected the broken down walls for himself.



Nehemiah 2:12 *"And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; ..."*

Assessing difficulties at night can be daunting, unless, like Nehemiah, we know what God has put in our hearts. The Lord taught us to weigh carefully the job to be done, before commencing the work (*Luke 14:28*). Being a practical man, Nehemiah had to know for himself the worst of the situation. That night ride confirmed the awful conditions, but he viewed the ruin through the remedy God put in his heart.

Assess the worst in the light of God's assistance.

3.3. IN STIRRING UP INFORMED CONFIDENCE (Nehemiah 2:17-18)

3.3.1. BY A CHALLENGE TO FACE UNITEDLY THE DISTRESSFUL CONDITION

To get action, Nehemiah stirred a discontent with conditions.



Nehemiah 2:17 *"Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire."*

3.3.2. BY A CALL TO JOIN TOGETHER IN REBUILDING THE WALL



Nehemiah 2:17 *"... Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, ..."*

Nehemiah used the first person plural: "we", to include himself in the work. He could not do the work alone, so he did not say "I" (singular), nor "you must work - I will oversee." No, he insisted on "we". None were excluded from the work, not even Nehemiah.

Leadership means personal involvement in the labour. "We" is the secret of effective calling to the work force. The servant is no greater than his Lord: where He sends, He goes - where we work, He works (*Mark 16:20*).

3.3.3. BY A CLEAR REHEARSING OF GOD'S GUIDANCE AND THE KING'S WORD



Nehemiah 2:18 *"And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me ..."*

They had divine assurance and human permission to get on with the work. A fully informed people, became a confident, fired up people.



Nehemiah 2:18 "... So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work."

They were inspired to labour, whereas before they had languished. We need not look for new workers, all that is needed is to inspire the workers we have.

3.4. IN DEPENDING ON GOD'S CONTROL (Nehemiah 2:19-20)

The enemy scorned, and maligned the motive for the work as rebellion. In the face of this opposition, Nehemiah's confidence was in the truth that God was in control.



Nehemiah 2:20 "So I answered them, and said to them, 'The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.'"

The strength of God's business people lies in trusting in the sure control of God. It is always good discretion to depend on God.

3.5. IN ORDERING OF WORK CO-ORDINATION (Nehemiah 3:1-32)

There can be nothing but admiration for the businesslike plan that Nehemiah had ready, which turned the resolutions of the people (*Nehemiah 2:18*) into satisfactory performances. Notice some of the principles brought into operation:

3.5.1. WELL THOUGHT OUT AHEAD

His full plan of operation had been well thought out ahead, so there was no delay in commencing the work.

3.5.2. PARTICIPATION WHOLLY VOLUNTARY

He brought the people to make a collective and a personal decision, making their participation wholly voluntary. In this way he was assured of their best work.

3.5.3. SET THEM IN WORKING PARTIES

He set them in working parties with appointed superintendents. The groups chosen, already had acceptable leaders. In the case of the repairing of the sheep gate, the high priest with his brethren made up a team (*Nehemiah 3:1*). In another team of sons, no leader is mentioned (*Nehemiah 3:3*). Perhaps they were so used to working together, each accepting the other's gifting, that no

superintendent was needed. In yet another team, the leader was a ruler, and his daughters made up his team (*Nehemiah 3:12*).

3.5.4. USED EVERYONE

He used everyone, no matter what their rank or gifting. Priests, governors, nobles, women, young people, "son of" (*Nehemiah 3:30*), and merchants (*Nehemiah 3:8, 31, 32*). All worked according to the plan, order and design of Nehemiah. So did the ordinary people who made up the whole.

A good business person knows how to fit all diverse personnel in, to the best advantage.

3.5.5. WORKED WHERE THEY HAD THE GREATEST PERSONAL INTEREST

He put people to work where they had the greatest personal interest: "made repairs by his house" (*Nehemiah 3:23 NKJV*), "in front of his dwelling" (*Nehemiah 3:30 NKJV*). By giving the people a personal stake in the project, he was assured that the work would be well done.

3.5.6. RECORDED INDICTMENT OF THOSE WHO DID NOT WORK

He recorded his indictment of those few who did not put in proper work effort (*Nehemiah 3:5*). Good management examines and indicates those who are lax and indifferent in their work.

3.5.7. RECOGNISED THE FAITHFUL

He also recognised the faithful workers who did their portion well (*Nehemiah 3:9*). His wise discretion would warm the hearts of the profitable workers.

3.5.8. PRAISED THE EARNEST WORKER

He praised the earnest worker (*Nehemiah 3:20*). It is important to give attention to the persevering and diligent, who patiently continue till the task is complete, and not only give attention to slack workers.

3.5.9. INSISTED ON ORDERLY WORK

He insisted on orderly work. Fifteen times it is recorded: "next to them", and sixteen times: "after them," describing the co-operation and unity in the work.

3.5.10. PLANNED FOR THE WORK TO PROGRESS SYSTEMATICALLY

Nehemiah planned that the work would progress systematically from the sheep gate (*Nehemiah 3:1*), to the fish gate (*Nehemiah 3:3*), to the old gate (*Nehemiah 3:6*), the valley gate (*Nehemiah 3:13*), the refuse gate (*Nehemiah 3:14*), the water gate (*Nehemiah 3:25,26*), the horse gate (*Nehemiah 3:28*), the east gate (*Nehemiah 3:29*), the gate of Miphkad (*Nehemiah 3:31*), ending at the sheep gate (*Nehemiah 3:32*).

Order is an important law to God and His business people. Nehemiah left a record that reveals much of his method as God's businessman for our learning. No matter what our profession or service, or involvement for the Lord, these principles applied, bring success.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. How important is it to exercise discretion in dealing with others, especially those in powerful positions? (*Nehemiah 2:9*).
2. Do you think it was lack of faith on Nehemiah's part to arrive with an armed escort? (*Nehemiah 2:9; Ezra 8:22*).
3. Should God's business people, faced with a great opportunity, seek to maximise co-operation?
4. Do you think it is important to spend time assessing and discerning the abilities of those to be involved in the work, before commencing the business or kingdom work? (*Nehemiah 2:11*).
5. Should leaders earnestly desire supernatural discernment? (*1 Corinthians 12:10,31*).
6. Is it wise to view your task in the worst possible light? (*Nehemiah 2:12*).
7. Do you view the worst of situations in the light of the remedy God has put in your heart?
8. Do you inspire others to work with you by fully informing them of the true conditions? (*Nehemiah 2:17*).
9. Do you believe personal involvement and example are the secret of getting others to work with you? (*Nehemiah 2:17*).
10. Do you tend to look for new workers instead of inspiring the ones you have?
11. Are you put off by those who scorn your vision, or are you steadfast in knowing God is in control? (*Nehemiah 2:19-20*).

12. Do you believe God gives the strength to accomplish what He has put in your heart to do, and that this is part of His prospering you? (*Nehemiah 2:20*).
13. When people respond positively to motivation (*Nehemiah 2:18*), how necessary is it to have a workable plan of operation ready?
14. Do you think it a good plan to set voluntary working groups under appointed superintendents?
15. What made Eliashib, the high priest, the right one to lead the team that built the sheep gate? (*Nehemiah 3:1*).
16. Do people work best when they have the greatest personal interest? (*Nehemiah 3:23,30*).
17. Does good management include challenging those who perform their duties indifferently? (*Nehemiah 3:5*).
18. Are you surprised to learn that women were working on building the wall? (*Nehemiah 3:12*).
19. Is orderly work a divine principle? Do you think there is a spiritual lesson in the work beginning and ending at the sheep gate? (*Nehemiah 3:1-3,32*).

4. HIS DETERMINATION (Nehemiah 4:1 to 6:19)

4.1. IN THE FACE OF CONTEMPT (Nehemiah 4:1-6)

The first way in which Sanballat and Tobiah attempted to hinder the rebuilding of the wall, was to use ridicule and contemptuous laughter.

4.1.1. THEY HELD THEIR WEAKNESS IN CONTEMPT



Nehemiah 4:2 "... What do these feeble Jews? ..."

Sanballat and Tobiah saw the Jews as feeble in numbers and resources; but they were mistaken, because they could not see that God was the Jews' helper and supplier.

4.1.2. THEY ALSO HELD THEIR TRUST IN CONTEMPT



Nehemiah 4:2 "... will they fortify themselves? ..."

How wrong again the enemy was. Ultimately God was their defence. Obedience in rebuilding the wall showed their trust was in Him.

4.1.3. THEY HELD THEIR SACRIFICE IN CONTEMPT



Nehemiah 4:2 "... will they sacrifice? ..."

Sanballat and Tobiah claimed, that should the Jews inaugurate their work with the offering of sacrifices, that it would avail them nothing. They did not know that victory is through the blood of the Lamb (*Revelation 12:11*).

4.1.4. THEY HELD THEIR ZEAL IN CONTEMPT



Nehemiah 4:2 "... will they make an end in a day?..."

They did not know that their zeal was according to Nehemiah's specific plan, not misguided enthusiasm.

4.1.5. THEY HELD THEIR TASK IN CONTEMPT



Nehemiah 4:2 "... will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"

This implied that they would have to make stones out of ashes, when in reality, sufficient stones remained amongst the rubbish, to complete the job.

Christ is building His church with living stones out of the rubbish heap of this world (*1 Peter 2:4-5*)

4.1.6. THEY HELD THEIR WORK IN CONTEMPT



Nehemiah 4:3 "Now Tobiah ... said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall."

The scorners were to discover that no labour is in vain. Nehemiah's answer to the ridicule, was prayer. To be treated with contempt can sometimes be harder to bear than other kinds of persecution. In this case, Nehemiah was incensed because he believed it was directed against God, and that the scorn was a direct challenge towards God.

Nehemiah asked God to hear what was being said (*Nehemiah 4:4*), and to let them be punished by their own reproach (*Nehemiah 4:4-5*). Total identification with God brings jealousy for His name. Notice that this prayer left the vengeance to God (*Deuteronomy 32:35*). Nehemiah did not take revenge into his own hands. The effect of the derision upon the builders, was that it speeded up their effort.



Nehemiah 4:6 *"So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work."*

They expressed their determination. When the heart is in the work, success is sure.

4.2. IN THE FACE OF CONSPIRACY (Nehemiah 4:7-23)



Nehemiah 4:8 *"and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion."*

This conspiracy was led by Sanballat and Tobiah. Others who joined them were Arabs, possibly one of the desert tribes in the hopes of getting plunder, Ammonites and the Ashdodites (*Nehemiah 4:7*): enemies who did not want Jerusalem safe for the Jews. Ridicule had failed, so they conspired to stop further progress to the wall by force of arms. Nehemiah showed courage and ability in facing the conspiracy. His answer was twofold - prayer, and the setting of a vigil (*Nehemiah 4:9*).

Victory lies in the awesome God who answers prayer. To prayer must be added vigilance against the enemy's attacks. Prayer without watchfulness is the sin of self-confidence (*Matthew 26:41; 1 Peter 4:7*).

The persistent rumour of imminent attack discouraged the workers. Judah, i.e. the Jews. Neighbouring Jews repeatedly urged those who were building, to leave the work and return home to protect their families (*Nehemiah 4:10-12*).

Ryrie

When doing God's business, "many adversaries" can be encountered (*1 Corinthians 16:9*).



Nehemiah 4:13 *"Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows."*

Not only does this show how determined Nehemiah was, it also demonstrated his skill and wisdom in a threatening military situation. He posted armed men in conspicuous

places as a deterrent to the enemy. He made up family groups that would insure loyalty and eagerness to defend one another. It is wonderful to see whole families unitedly involved in the Lord's work. He gave a rallying word to nobles, leaders and all the people (*Nehemiah 4:14 NKJV*). It may be summarised as: Be fearless - Be strengthened, "Remember the Lord, great and awesome" - Be valiant, "Fight" - Be selfless, "for your brethren, your sons". The more we think of the Lord, the more we will think of others.



Nehemiah 4:15 "... and God had brought their counsel to nought, ..."

The weapons formed against you shall not prosper. Nehemiah's strategy in *Nehemiah 4:16-20* can be allied to work for the Lord today.

- Be diligent in business and ready for opposition (*Nehemiah 4:16-17*).
- Be united and carry out your assigned responsibilities.
- Be responsible in working with others.
- Be obedient to appointed leaders.
- Be dependable in work and defence (*Nehemiah 4:18*).
- Be responsive and alert to active commands, (*Nehemiah 4:19-20*) "the sound of the trumpet".
- Be believing that God will be for you, (*Nehemiah 4:20*) "God will fight for us".
- Be persistent in remaining at your work (*Nehemiah 4:21-22*).
- Be self-denying if necessary, to the point of self-neglect (*Nehemiah 4:23*).

Nehemiah's success came through his method of getting all working - always working - and working their all. A determined leader gets determined followers.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. What kind of ridicule have you had to endure from your Sanballat and Tobiah? (*Nehemiah 4:1*).
2. Do you answer ridicule by taking it to the Lord in prayer? (*Nehemiah 4:4-5*). Are you more jealous for God's name than concerned for your own hurts? (*Nehemiah 4:5*).
3. Do you find that what is intended by the enemy to slow down the work, becomes a means of speeding up the work? (*Nehemiah 4:6*). What attitude of mind did the ridicule produce in the people? (*Nehemiah 4:6*).
4. Do you find that when ridicule fails, those who oppose conspire to enforce their will? (*Nehemiah 4:7-8*).
5. Do you agree that prayer without watchfulness can be an evidence of the sin of self-confidence? (*Nehemiah 4:9; Matthew 26:41; 1 Peter 4:7*).
6. What do you do in collaboration with God, to make sure that no weapon formed against you prevails? (*Nehemiah 4:13; Isaiah 54:17*).
7. In which way can the strategy and example of *Nehemiah 4:16-23* be applied to your situation and work for God?

4.3. IN THE FACE OF COMPLAINTS (Nehemiah 5:1-19)

Much determination is needed to fortify against enemies without, and deal with dissension and clamour within. Being a leader often means having to responsibly deal with people's complaints.



Nehemiah 5:1 *"And there was a great cry of the people ..."*

The poor complained that they could not feed their many children, because of debt, famine and taxation (*Nehemiah 5:1-3*). There were those who had pledged land and children to raise the Persian king's taxes (*Nehemiah 5:4*). The usury charged by those of their own flesh and blood was the main cause of their grief (*Nehemiah 5:5*).

"The lending of money etc. at interest is not regarded in the Bible as wrong in itself (*Deuteronomy 23:19,20, Matthew 25:27*), but it was forbidden as between one Israelite and another (*Exodus 22:25*), since the money was borrowed for the relief of distress and not for the development of trade."

New Bible Commentary

LEARN FROM THE COMMENDABLE ACT OF NEHEMIAH:

4.3.1. HE WAS ANGRY AT UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (Nehemiah 5:6)

This was not that kind of anger which the Lord said is in danger of judgment (*Matthew 5:22*). These men were "brethren", but they showed no brotherly love.

4.3.2. HE ACTED ONLY AFTER SERIOUS THOUGHT (Nehemiah 5:7)

No doubt he would have taken counsel with the leaders, but they themselves were the chief offenders of the complaints. There are times when consultation with the Lord alone has to be the base for action. This does not excuse thoughtless or careless action.

4.3.3. HE REBUKED THE OFFENDERS IN SPITE OF THEIR HIGH POSITION (Nehemiah 5:7)

High position or privileged status should not deter necessary rebuke.

4.3.4. HE CALLED A GENERAL MEETING ON THE ISSUE (Nehemiah 5:7)

Righteousness must be attained, but it must also be seen to be attained. All complainants need to be satisfied by witnessing righteous action.

4.3.5. HE TESTIFIED TO HIS OWN PROPER CONDUCT (Nehemiah 5:8)

Nehemiah appealed in this way to a well-known fact that he and others had been in the habit of redeeming enslaved Jews from among the Gentile nations.

4.3.6. HE ACTED TO BRING HONOUR TO GOD (Nehemiah 5:9)



Nehemiah 5:9 *"Then I said, 'What you are doing is not good ...'"*

When the Lord's people do not walk in His fear, they dishonour Him. All our vital interests should be interwoven with His, so that He is honoured by us.

4.3.7. HE ASKED THAT MORTGAGING AND PLEDGE-TAKING AMONG BRETHREN BE STOPPED (Nehemiah 5:10)



Nehemiah 5:10 *"... Please, let us stop this usury!"*

4.3.8. HE REQUESTED THAT FULL RESTITUTION BE MADE (Nehemiah 5:11)

The response of the offenders was positive (*Nehemiah 5:12*).

4.3.9. HE REQUIRED AN OATH ACCORDING TO THEIR PROMISE (Nehemiah 5:12)

This is good business practice. Shaking hands on a deal is one thing, but the written contract is what matters. Christians should not be slothful in business

4.3.10. HE APPEALED FOR GOOD JUDGMENT ON THOSE WHO BROKE THEIR PROMISES (Nehemiah 5:13)

The consequences of breaking contract and word must be plain and understood. Once again, the response was acceptable and praise was expressed to God (*Nehemiah 5:13*).

4.3.11. HE LIVED OUT MORE THAN HE EXPECTED FROM OTHERS (Nehemiah 5:14-19)

Other governors would demand much and give little. He ruled for 12 years without charge for his services (*Nehemiah 5:14-15*). Nor did he allow his servants to charge for services rendered (*Nehemiah 5:15*). He desired the praise of God above any benefits man could give (*Nehemiah 5:18-19*).

Example always speaks louder than words.

4.4. IN THE FACE OF CRAFTINESS (Nehemiah 6:1-4)

Nehemiah's enemies failed to stop the building of the wall, and only the hanging of the doors in the gates remained to be done. Nehemiah's enemies craftily sought to get him out of the city, some 19 miles north of Jerusalem, with the plot to assassinate him (*Nehemiah 6:1-2*). Nehemiah's action was to send messengers to tell them:



Nehemiah 6:3 "... 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?'"

His Answer Was Uncompromising

"I cannot." He did not say, "I will have to think about it." He was committed to God's work and would not compromise.

His Answer Was Unassailable

"I am doing a great work." Work for God excels all other work.

His Answer Was Unshakeable

"Why should the work cease?" Mere talking must never substitute doing.

His Answer Was Unmistakable

"I cannot ... leave it and come down to you." To depart from devotion to the Lord's work, is to "come down" to danger.

His Answer Was Unchanged (Nehemiah 6:4)

Though they sent their message four times, he was determined to be steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord.

4.5. IN THE FACE OF CHARGES (Nehemiah 6:5-9)

Sanballat sent his servant a fifth time with a slanderous letter.



Nehemiah 6:6,7 "... you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. ⁷ And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you ..."

Nehemiah was misrepresented as a rebel against the king of Persia, and was accused of being motivated with self-seeking pride.

Perhaps Malachi was prophesying at this time and Sanballat deliberately twisted his message about Messiah the king and applied it to Nehemiah. **Ryrie**

Nehemiah not only denied the slander as false, he named the source of evil misrepresentation: "invented in your own heart (*Nehemiah 6:8*).

When occasioned, God's servant must reprove and rebuke.



Nehemiah knew that intimidation was the intention.

Nehemiah 6:9 "*For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, 'Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.'* ..."



Fear traps and paralyzes activity, even service for God.

Proverbs 29:25 "*The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.*"

Confidence in God overcomes fear of man. Nehemiah, through prayer, drew from the real source of strength.



Nehemiah 6:9 "...Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

Nehemiah's need was strong hands to work the Lord's purposes, and instantly: "now", not some time in the future. His prayer was appropriating faith.

4.6. IN THE FACE OF CHEATING (Nehemiah 6:10-14)

A priest prophet, named "Shemaiah the son of Delaiah", was used to set a treacherous plot. For money, he was prepared to lie to Nehemiah. This false prophet tried to get him to hide in the Temple to make him appear as a coward in the eyes of the people. There is no safety except in the place of fulfilling God's purposes for our lives. Nehemiah discerned Shemaiah's treachery. His answer was:



Nehemiah 6:11 "... Should such a man as I flee? ..."

Being a prospered man, and a protected man because of the purpose of his calling, he would not and could not flee or hide away and hinder the culmination of the work.

Knowing who you are and whom you serve, and where you serve, will show you what to do when confronted with danger.

Nehemiah called on God to remember cheating, deceiving prophets (*Nehemiah 6:14*). He took no personal action against them, he committed them to God's hands.

4.7. IN THE FACE OF CORRESPONDENCE (Nehemiah 6:15-19)

The achievement of finishing the wall in fifty-two days, brought depression to Nehemiah's enemies. Even they could see the hand of God (*Nehemiah 6:15-16*). Seeing the hand of God did not turn them to God, as is also the case with certain workers of iniquity today.

Opposition and attempts to frighten continued (*Nehemiah 6:17-19*). Tobiah had useful relationships through marriage, and carried on destructive correspondence. So he was kept fully informed of all Nehemiah's words, but they put only the best side of Tobiah in any report to Nehemiah. The purpose of Tobiah's letters to try to frighten Nehemiah, did not succeed. With determination, the work was continued and triumphantly completed.

We must not believe the propaganda of those who would stop us working, even if those responsible for the misinformation believe it themselves.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Should injustice provoke in you a righteous anger? (*Nehemiah 5:1-6; Matthew 5:22*).
2. Should serious thought precede rebuke of offending leaders, or should anyone be the victim of careless public rebuke? (*Nehemiah 5:7*)
3. Could you qualify to deal with another's improper conduct by the integrity of your own conduct? (*Nehemiah 5:8-9*).
4. Would you ask that others be generous, and withhold yourself? (*Nehemiah 5:10-11*).
5. When an agreement is arrived at, is it good business practice to insist on a written contract, even if it is business with a family member, and should the consequences of breaking the word be explained? (*Nehemiah 5:12-13*).
6. Should a leader be known for leading by example? (*Nehemiah 5:14-19*).
7. Do you expect the cunning schemes of Satan to divert you from the priority of God's work? (*Nehemiah 6:1-4*).
8. Are you determined to be steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord? (*Nehemiah 6:3*).
9. Who is the source of slander, and what, in your opinion, is the best way to respond to slander? (*Nehemiah 6:6-8*).
10. How do you keep from the trap of fear? (*Nehemiah 6:9; Proverbs 29:25*).
11. What is one of the motivations of a false prophet? (*Nehemiah 6:10-13*).

12. When Nehemiah discerned Shemaiah's treachery, how did his answer show you what to do when confronted with danger? (*Nehemiah 6:11*).
13. Do you believe Nehemiah was right not to take personal action against the deceiving prophets, but to rather commit them to God's hands? (*Nehemiah 6:14*).
14. Are you impressed with the achievement of Nehemiah and the people, finishing the wall in fifty-two days? What did this say to their enemies? (*Nehemiah 6:15-16*).
15. Does success stop the opposition from attempting to frighten and get advantage? (*Nehemiah 5:17-19*).
16. Do you believe the propaganda of those whose aim is to stop the work?

5. HIS DECISIVENESS (Nehemiah 7:1-73)

5.1. IN SETTING A WATCH OF THE CITY (Nehemiah 7:1)

The hanging of the gates completed Nehemiah's great rebuilding task. The city was once more enclosed and a defence for the Temple realised. In businesslike fashion Nehemiah set about manning the gates with gatekeepers. Walls are of little use without men to man them. Emphasis in building for God should be on people and ministries, not bricks and mortar.

Interestingly, Levites were chosen to police the gates of the city. The duty of guarding the Temple gates had always been the charge of the Levites (*1 Chronicles 9:17, 26:12-19*). Not only would their task be to raise alarm in case of threatened attack from without, they would be responsible for what came in and out of the city. They were also to maintain order in the large area of the gate, which was used for business transactions and as a place where elders discussed and administered law.

That Nehemiah chose those of the priesthood to be guardians, points to the need for the application of God's Word in all these important activities. As men of God, the priests influenced the whole city community for God. The best watch that can be set over modern cities, is that of the Church at prayer and living out the living Word before the community.

5.2. IN SETTING FAITHFUL LEADERS IN CHARGE (Nehemiah 7:2-4)



Nehemiah 7:2 *"That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many."*

God's businessman was wise in delegation of responsibility. He exercised discerning care in his selection of men to assist him. Nehemiah chose his proven brother, Hanani, earlier spoken of as "one of my brethren" (*Nehemiah 1:2 KJV*), now as his brother. It is important to notice that the appointment was not based on the family relationship, but on his brother's skill and efficiency: a guideline to all business people in using family in their company employ.

Hanani was also chosen as one who already excelled as "the ruler of the palace" or "leader of the citadel" (NKJV). The two other deciding factors were faithfulness and fearing God, or dependability and devotion - above average.

God's businessman gave specific, meaningful instructions to those appointed.



Nehemiah 7:3 *"... Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; ..."*

The gates were not to be opened at sunrise, a normal practice, but much later, when the guard was in place and the city was awake and alert. They would be less open to surprise attack.

In conducting the Lord's business we must be wisely cautious, alert, and prepared for all necessary action.



Nehemiah 7:3 *"... and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house."*

The lessons are:

- Mutual co-operation in watchfulness.
- Vigilance, protecting the business and the production.
- And most importantly, preservation of Biblical home life.

In overview, God's business people recognise the essential requirements ahead.



Nehemiah 7:4 *"Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt."*

For Nehemiah, the next important step was the repopulating of Jerusalem.

A good businessman considers the necessary inner expansion that has to take place in the company, so as to secure and advance it. In all God's work, inner growth is the secret of development and multiplication. Leadership must make the definitive decisions and give the explicit instructions to achieve this.

5.3. IN SETTING A STANDARD FOR A CENSUS (Nehemiah 7:5-73)

Nehemiah desired that Jerusalem be populated by people of true ancestry. The record he found (*Nehemiah 7:5*) was to form the basis for checking possible inhabitants as to their genealogy. Decisiveness on the part of Nehemiah and his deputies would be required, as claims to land, houses and priesthood were established or questioned. The list he used is like that of *Ezra 2:1-70*, which recorded those who returned with Zerubbabel.

The lesson for the business men and women, is to operate from that which is provable and factual. It is also far better to qualify as God's people, than to have the recognition that comes from worldly standards. Uncompromising faithfulness to God must mark business practice.

THE DIVISIONS OF THE RECORD COULD BE AS FOLLOWS:-

Captivity (Nehemiah 7:7-38)

This reminds us that each generation carries its share of responsibility for faithfulness and purity.

The Priests And The Levites (Nehemiah 7:39-45)

This group was large in numbers, speaking of the importance of spiritual responsibility.

The Temple Attendants (Nehemiah 7:46-60)

"The Nethinim", those who served in the capacity of helping others. No work was maintained without them. Order and organisation play an important role in the releasing of gifting.

Those With Polluted Genealogy Who Could Not Serve As Priests (Nehemiah 7:61-65)

The work of God is to be done by those who are born of God.



John 1:13 *"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."*

"Not of blood", literally "bloods", ie. contains no human element. "Not of the will of man": not of human will.

Born again business people are needed in abundance in today's world.

A Record Of Numbers Of People And Possessions (Nehemiah 7:66-69)

The whole company numbered 42,360, besides servants: 7,337, singers: 245, horses: 736, mules: 245, camels: 435, and 6,720 donkeys. Under God's blessing, the returning

captives were greatly helped. It is good to take stock and count your blessings, and see what the Lord has done.

Examples Of Giving To Treasury Collection (Nehemiah 7:71-73)

When God moves hearts, hands readily give, and His people and His work are prospered.

Decisiveness needs to characterise God's businessmen today
- God will respond with prosperity.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. What kind of watch would you like to see in effect over our cities? (*Nehemiah 7:1*).
2. Who, in your opinion, are best qualified to be guardians of our modern cities?
3. When is it wise to appoint a relative to an important position? (*Nehemiah 7:2*).
4. How important is people-growth to advancement and expansion? (*Nehemiah 2- 3*).
5. Do you believe that those who populate the city of God need to qualify as God's people? (*Nehemiah 7:5*).
6. Do you believe that each generation of God's people must share responsibility for faithfulness and spiritual purity? (*Nehemiah 7:7-34*).
7. Do you believe that decisiveness needs to characterise God's business people today?
8. When God moves His people's hearts, do they give willingly, and what kind of prosperity follows? (*Nehemiah 7:71-73*).

6. HIS DELIGHT (Nehemiah 8:1 - 10:39)

6.1. IN THE READING OF THE WORD OF THE COVENANT (Nehemiah 8:1-8)

The rebuilding of the walls by Nehemiah, God's businessman, made possible the revival of the Word under Ezra the priest.

God uses His kingdom business sons and daughters to open up, by practical means, opportunities for sowing His Word in the hearts of the people.

Since the beginning of the book of Nehemiah, we have heard nothing of Ezra. It may be that he had returned to the king of Persia to make a report of his work. We cannot blame him for not building the walls, since he had not been authorized to do this, nor did he hold the position of governor. Nehemiah was called of God to rebuild the walls of the city, while Ezra was the priest whose task was to teach the law. God calls each man to his own work, and equips him for this. **J. Stafford Wright. The Biblical expositor**

See the many causes of delight in this gripping scene.

6.1.1. IT WAS A TIME OF HOLY CONVOCATION (Nehemiah 8:1)



Nehemiah 7:73 "... and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities."



Nehemiah 8:1 "And all the people gathered themselves together ..."

It was the time of the feast of trumpets (*Leviticus 23:24*). How special to begin a new civil year with the blowing of the trumpet for a time of holy convocation.

How important it is that God's business people begin new rounds of secular work, by marking them as sacred to the Lord, knowing that all must be done to the glory of God.

6.1.2. IT WAS HELD IN THE OPEN SPACE BEFORE THE WATER GATE (NEHEMIAH 8:1)

What a gathering to warm the heart. "All" the people together, and how appropriate the place, in front of the Water Gate. This was the place where the written Word of God was given to them as living water.

6.1.3. READING OF THE WORD WAS EAGERLY REQUESTED (Nehemiah 8:1-2)



Nehemiah 8:1 "... and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book ..."

This could only be a move of God's Spirit. Here was a people lax in keeping God's Word, yearning after its instruction. Building for God under Nehemiah's zealous leadership, gave the Holy Spirit opportunity to stir desire in the people for better things, like the living Word.

6.1.4. THE WORD WAS READ WITH EMPHASIS ON EXPLANATION (Nehemiah 8:3-4)

It was read "from the morning until midday" (*Nehemiah 8:3* KJV) by Ezra and his assistants (*Nehemiah 8:7*), and was accompanied by exposition (*Nehemiah 8:7-8*).

Here are essentials to good teaching:

- The Scriptures must be read.
 - The plain sense of what is read must be explained.
 - The hearers must be made to understand with heart and mind what is written.
-

6.1.5. READING OF THE WORD WAS RECEIVED WITH REVERENCE AND ATTENTIVENESS (Nehemiah 8:5-8)



Nehemiah 8:5 "... when he opened it, all the people stood up:"

Standing up indicated special respect for the Word, and readiness to hear and obey it.



Nehemiah 8:3 "... and the ears of all the people were attentive ..."

They were attentive to the Word for six hours. Both teacher and people were prepared for the Word through worship (*Nehemiah 8:6*).

6.2. IN THE RENEWED DAYS OF COVENANT (Nehemiah 8:9-18)

What a delight for Nehemiah to celebrate the feast of trumpets and the impending "Feast of Tabernacles", which was now to be revived, within the closed walls of Jerusalem. Conviction of sin caused the people to weep, appropriate to the days of atonement (on the tenth day of the month), but not on the feast of trumpets. **Ryrie**

Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest, by instruction and exhortation, got them to dry their tears and celebrate with joy (*Nehemiah 8:9-12*). Their sorrow was to be put aside in exchange for the joy of the Lord (*Nehemiah 8:10*).

Even in business, one can experience the joy of the Lord as strength.

- It is joy of the Lord in His perfection - His work, government, His relationship with us, His joy in us, His fruit of joy (*Galatians 5:22*).
- It is fellowship with Him in His joy.
- It is His joy that constitutes your strength, becomes your

stronghold and fortress.

- It is His joy that becomes your powerhouse to do the will and pleasure of God.

Set apart your days as days of the joy of the Lord. In serving, the joy of the Lord makes us free givers, as those who have freely received.



Nehemiah 8:12 *"And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."*

Out of His joy in us, flows ministry to others. (*Matthew 10:8*). In accordance with the Word, the whole congregation prepared to dwell in booths (*Nehemiah 8:13-18*). Obedience was revived (*Nehemiah 8:14*). Remembrance was revived (*Leviticus 23:43*).

There must be times in which we check our obedience, and are mindful of God's loving kindness to us.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Can practical, organised work by God's business people, prepare the way for a revival of the Word of God in cities? (*Nehemiah 8:1-2*).
2. Why was it significant that the people were gathered at the water gate to hear the Word? (*Nehemiah 8:1*).
3. Can God the Holy Spirit move people today, to ask for the reading and explanation of the Word of God? (*Nehemiah 8:1*).
4. What are the essentials of good teaching? (*Nehemiah 8:3,7-8*).
5. Do you believe this kind of teaching will result in attention and reverence today? (*Nehemiah 8:3,5*).
6. Would you expect that even in business, the joy of the Lord can be experienced as strength? (*Nehemiah 8:10*).
7. Is it out of the joy of the Lord that service flows? (*Nehemiah 8:12*).
8. Are you stirred to obedience and remembrance by the joy of the Lord? (*Nehemiah 8:14; Leviticus 23:43*)

6.3. IN THE READINESS OF THEIR CONFESSION (Nehemiah 9:1-3)



Nehemiah 9:1,2 *"Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads. Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers."*

Only one clear day since the joy and rejoicing of the Feast of Tabernacles, found Israel fasting and confessing sin. Time spent in rejoicing in the commemoration of the Lord's goodness, led to confession of sin, and repentance (*Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 7:10*).

Times of congratulation and joy at success in business, should lead to acknowledgement of God's goodness, that in spite of failures and lack of righteous dealings, we have been brought through. This should lead to confession and change of mind, that will reflect in future conduct. God waits that He may prosper more. Without the action of correction on our part, further blessing may be withheld by God. To express their sorrow and new resolve, Israel needed to separate themselves from all other peoples.

In business, the godly cannot come to a change of mind and heart, by approaching God in the company of the humanistic or the worldly minded. It is not a case of: 'Sorry, God, we are only doing what the mixed company does.' We must approach God, convicted by His Word, with a determination to be changed by His Word and to conduct business as His people. Confession leads to change of mind, and conduct is reinforced by engaging in reading of the Word and in active worship.



Nehemiah 9:3 *"And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshipped the LORD their God."*

Setting apart a day for the reading of the Word, confession, and worship, will help to produce a people and business after the heart of God.

6.4. IN REHEARSING BEFORE GOD THEIR CONFESSION (Nehemiah 9:4 - 10:38)

The description of their cry of confession, as a people from the time of their fathers to their own day, was most probably composed by Ezra. The Levites led this penitential cry.

6.4.1. THEIR CRY WAS OUT OF AN AWESOME ADORATION OF GOD (Nehemiah 9:5-6)

As Creator and Preserver.

6.4.2. THEIR CRY WAS OUT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD'S GRACIOUS DEALINGS (Nehemiah 9:7-25)

- Having chosen Abraham and faithfully delivering their fathers from Pharaoh (*Nehemiah 9:7-10*).
- Having granted miracles in the wilderness wanderings despite rebellion (*Nehemiah 9:11-21*).
- Having given great military victories to conquer the land (*Nehemiah 9:22-25*).

6.4.3. THEIR CRY WAS OUT OF AWAKENED RECOGNITION OF APOSTASY UNDER THE JUDGES (Nehemiah 9:26-28)



Nehemiah 9:27,28 "... You gave them deliverers who saved them ... ²⁸ ... They again did evil before You ..."

6.4.4. THEIR CRY WAS OUT OF ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S REASON FOR ADMINISTERING PUNISHMENT (Nehemiah 9:29-35)



Nehemiah 9:30 "Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands."

6.4.5. THEIR CRY WAS OUT OF THEIR PRESENT ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUED SERVITUDE (Nehemiah 9:36-37)



Nehemiah 9:36,37 "... we are servants this day ..."

and we are in great distress."

Their distress was because of disobedience to God's law.

6.4.6. THEIR CRY WAS OUT OF THEIR POSITIVE ASSERTION TO ACCEPT AND RENEW COVENANT (Nehemiah 9:38)



Nehemiah 9:38 *"And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; ..."*

It must have been with delight that Nehemiah, as governor, appended his seal first of all (*Nehemiah 10:1*). This public sealing of the document, that specifically set out their commitment to keep God's law, and their promises to maintain worship of God, would reinforce their resolve to fulfill their transactions.

After Nehemiah, the leaders of the priestly and Levitical houses added their seal, and after them, the chiefs of the people (*Nehemiah 10:1-27*). This was no mere ceremony, all put their seal, and all the people ratified the covenant with full understanding (*Nehemiah 10:28-29*).

What a reminder never to sign any document, or to make any commitment, without full knowledge and understanding. Certain resolutions were given special mention (*Nehemiah 10:29-30*). They were actually summaries of the law, having particular application to needs that had to be addressed, namely:

Separation From The Pagan Population (Nehemiah 10:29-30)



Deuteronomy 7:3,4 *"Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 'For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.'"*

The believer today is to be separated from evil (2 Corinthians 6:14, 7:1)



2 Corinthians 6:14 *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? "*

Ryrie summarises: This injunction applies to marriage, business, and ecclesiastical and intimate personal relationships.

Paul quoted Isaiah 52:11,



2 Corinthians 6:17 *"... 'Come out from among them And be separate, ...'"*

Remember that he was specifically speaking about "yoked" relationships with unbelievers. In such relationships there can be no agreement or harmony, and they are to be avoided. A yoked relationship between a believer and an unbeliever, is like trying to plough with an ox and a donkey. Separation does not require isolation of the believer from

society, or withdrawal from the lost neighbour. As Jesus sought and helped the lost, so must we.

That is quite different from a bondage marriage with an unbeliever, binding oneself to an unethical worldly business partner, or compromising the faith by uniting with others in pagan practice. Such would bring destruction of our witness.

Separation Of The Sabbath From Commercial Activity And Keeping Holy Days (Nehemiah 10:31)



Exodus 20:8 *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."*



Deuteronomy 5:15 *"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."*

Keeping the Sabbath marked Israel as the Lord's people. It was given to them as a sign of God's covenant, and as a reminder that He had redeemed them from bondage in Egypt.

Christians meet in worship on the first day of the week, proclaiming Christ's death and resurrection, which brought deliverance from sin and gave eternal rest. We are not to forsake the gatherings of the Lord's people (*Hebrews 10:25*). Our minds are constantly renewed in worship and by the Word, so that in everyday life and business, we can clearly set forth the alternative way of life in Christ.

Setting Apart The Seventh Year For Remission Of Debts (Nehemiah 10:31)

They promised to observe the seventh year by giving the land rest (*Leviticus 25:4*). In the seventh year, they would also unconditionally give remission of debts to fellow Israelites (*Deuteronomy 15:1-6*). This provision in the law dealt a blow to covetousness and greed of gain. Also, it allowed a new start to be made and the economy was stimulated.

The Spirit of Christ in business people brings about concern for others, forgiveness, and unselfish dealings.

Securing Temple Worship Through Personal Support (Nehemiah 10:32-39)



Nehemiah 10:32,33 *"Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; ³³ ... and for all the work of the house of our God. "*

This was based on *Exodus 30:13*, though the amount was less. It became the half shekel in New Testament times. They would be faithful in:

- Wood offerings (*Nehemiah 10:34*).
- Bringing firstfruits (*Nehemiah 10:35*).
- Offerings for firstborn sons (*Nehemiah 10:36*).
- Bringing firstlings of their herds and other prescribed

offerings(*Nehemiah 10:36-37*).

- Giving of tithes. The Levites would also bring tithes (*Nehemiah 10:37-39*).

Our consecration to God must include the dedication of our substance. Systematic giving is the mark of good stewardship. Worshipping God with our substance is a spiritual activity that is pleasing to God.

Businesslike liberality advances the fulfilment of the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:19-20*), and provides for the proper care of those in the household of faith.



Galatians 6:10 *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."*

Concern for those in the household of faith is a special obligation of the children of God.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. How important do you think it is for Christian business people to set apart a day for focusing on the Word, confession, and worship?(*Nehemiah 9-3*)
2. Do you honestly assess God's past dealings with you, and if so, does this assessment lead you to an awesome view of God, and dependence on His Almightyness? (*Nehemiah 9:4- 37*).
3. Does your consideration of God's justice and faithfulness lead you to renewed commitment? (*Nehemiah 9:38*).
4. Would you sign a document of commitment without understanding its special requirements? (*Nehemiah 10:1-39*).
5. What kind of separation should you practice? (*Nehemiah 10:29-31; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 7:1*).
6. Do you practice systematic giving as evidence of your stewardship for God? (*Nehemiah 10:32-33. Galatians 6:10*).

7. HIS DILIGENCE (Nehemiah 11:1 to 13:31)

7.1. HIS DILIGENCE IN RE-POPULATING JERUSALEM BY CHOOSING (Nehemiah 11:1-24)

Nehemiah took the necessary steps to increase the population of Jerusalem, which was essential to its proper development as a capital city, and to its defence.



Nehemiah 11:1 *"And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: ..."*

Jerusalem, being the accepted centre for worship, was also the nerve-centre of public, political and economic life. Therefore, it was the place of residence for the governor, those who served him, and all other civil leaders. Because the spiritual life of the nation was based in the city, the high priest and all who served in the Temple lived there. No persuasion was needed to get the leaders to dwell in the city - their function made that mandatory. There is a compulsion in leaders to install themselves where their gifting can be most fully used.

7.1.1. NEHEMIAH ALLOWED THE SELECTION OF INHABITANTS TO BE BY LOT (Nehemiah 11:1)



Nehemiah 11:1 *"... the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities."*

By the casting of lots, the people chosen were accepted as having been chosen by the Lord.



Proverbs 16:33 *"The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the Lord."*

This insured that the added population was not only of pure Jewish descent, but that all were sovereignly placed in the city by the Lord Himself.

It is good business to seek the Lord's choosing in the placement of people, in all our enterprises.

7.1.2. SPECIAL BLESSING COMES UPON THOSE WHO VOLUNTARILY GIVE THEMSELVES (Nehemiah 11:2)



Nehemiah 11:2 *"And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem."*

This willingness to uproot themselves and their families, and start again in the city, was commendable. It also indicated a work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. They were just as much chosen by the Lord, as were those upon whom the lot had fallen.

The Holy Spirit births in us the willing and self-giving nature of Jesus, who gave Himself for us. This makes evident that the old, self-centred, sinful life has died, and that we now live the life of the Son of God (*Galatians 2:20*). The people of God can warmly appreciate and bless the grace of God, in the actions of those who voluntarily give themselves. Self-forgetting love wins an answering affection. All we do should be done "as to the Lord." (*Ephesians 6:7 KJV*). It is good if men bless us, but God's approval should be our goal, and that is what brings true satisfaction.

7.1.3. THE RECORD OF THE LIST OF RESIDENTS IN JERUSALEM (*Nehemiah 11:3-24*)

This List Of City Residents Shows Something Of The Ordered Life Of The City

- The overseer of Benjamin was named (*Nehemiah 11:7-9*).
- The overseer of the priests was named (*Nehemiah 11:10,14*).
- The overseer of the Levites was named (*Nehemiah 11:22*).
- The leader who began thanksgiving was named (*Nehemiah 11:17*).
- The overseers of business outside the house of God were named (*Nehemiah 11:16*).
- The overseer of the Temple singers was named (*Nehemiah 11:22*).

This speaks of every manner of service being under responsible supervision, so that all was carefully conducted with proper accountability in place. We are exhorted not to be slothful in business (*Romans 12:11*).

This List Of City Residents Displays All Types Of Involvement In Service

Leadership (*Nehemiah 11:1*) Priestly (*Nehemiah 11:10*)
Business (*Nehemiah 11:16*) Artists (*Nehemiah 11:17,22*)
Guards (*Nehemiah 11:19*) Administrators (*Nehemiah 11:24*)

These are works different in kind, but all contributing to the common good and welfare of all. Successful business is always dependent on the availability of different skills, and once found, the wisdom to unite them, to get the desired result. In both sacred and secular business, interdependence should be practiced. It is important to be open to the input and guidance of those more skilled than ourselves.



1 Corinthians 12:21 *"And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'"*

7.2. HIS DILIGENCE IN RECOGNISING EXISTING POPULATIONS OF OTHER CITIES (*Nehemiah 11:25-36*)

These verses list the towns in former territories of Judah.



Nehemiah 11:20 *".. the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance."*



Nehemiah 11:25 *"And as for the villages with their fields, ... Kirjath Arba and its villages, Dibon and its villages, Jekabzeel and its villages;"*



Nehemiah 11:36 *"And of the Levites were divisions in Judah, and in Benjamin."*

Other cities, towns and villages were listed. They were important to Jerusalem, and the holy city was important to them. The unity and oneness of the people was their strength

It is a strength in business, to recognise that the central hub needs the vital links of the outlying centres, just as they need the hub, to aid stability and growth.



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Do leaders naturally reside where their gifting can be most fully used? (*Nehemiah 11:1*).
2. Would you expect special blessing to be on those who voluntarily give themselves? (*Nehemiah 11:2*).
3. Are all the different types of gifting needed in God's service? (*Nehemiah 11:1, 10, 16, 17, 19, 22, 24*).
4. Is it good business sense to recognise that the central hub needs to be vitally linked with the outlying centres? (*Nehemiah 11:25-36*).

7.3. HIS DILIGENCE IN VALUING THE PRIESTLY LEVITE CONTRIBUTION (Nehemiah 12:1-26)



Nehemiah 12:1 *"Now these are the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel ..."*

These verses provide more than just a checklist by which succeeding priests proved their right to serve, through their lineage. They indicate how highly ministers of the Lord are valued. The contents of these verses may be divided as:

- Levitical and priestly families that returned with Zerubbabel (*Nehemiah 12:1-9*).
- High priests from Jeshua to Jaddua (*Nehemiah 12:10,11*).
- Heads of the priestly courses, in the time of the high priest, Joiakim (*Nehemiah 12:12-21*).

Possibly a later insertion as Darius is mentioned as contemporary king (*Nehemiah 12:22-23*), at least a century later than Nehemiah's reforms. One of the reasons for the insertion was possibly to show that the practice of accurately recording the heads of the priestly and Levitical courses, which Nehemiah has noted as belonging to the days of Joiakim, was continued under his successors. **The New Bible Commentary Revised** - Inter-Varsity Press

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary gives reasons against the idea of these verses being a later insertion. Chief Levitical families of Joiakim times and later (*Nehemiah 12:24-26*).

Profitable lessons which these lists suggest:-

7.3.1. MINISTRY TO THE LORD IS OPEN TO ALL KINDS OF GIFTINGS

We read of those who were high priests and priests, of those who had a ministry in assisting them, of singers and musicians, doorkeepers and guards, and workers of the treasury. Even ordinary employment and business can and should be done as to the Lord. Everything we do should have the stamp of "holiness unto the Lord." (*Zechariah 14:20 KJV*).

7.3.2. IN WORSHIP, SONGS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING ARE GIVEN PRIORITY (*Nehemiah 12:24*)

There is a place for the ordered rendering of praise, and in New Testament worship, singing in the Spirit and in the understanding (*1 Corinthians 14:15*). It is an offering by faith, of sacrifices to the Lord. (*Hebrews 13:15*).

Singing in the supernatural releases miraculous aid in times of business dilemma.

7.3.3. THE QUALITIES OF SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY SHARPEN PRACTICAL EMPLOYMENT

Standing at a door, being a watchman, and carrying out repetitive tasks, all become important and more meaningful to the worker when working with the knowledge that, "I am appointed by the King, what I do is personally for Him, my worship is extended to my practical service."

7.3.4. BEING SUCCEEDED IN SERVICE MEANS PROMOTION TO SERVICE IN THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE

It can be very motivating to our service, to keep before us that service here is preparation for service there, when we shall be forever with the Lord and serve Him. (*1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 7:15*).

7.3.5. ACCURATE RECORDS ARE KEPT BY THE LORD, OF THOSE WHO SERVE HIM



Malachi 3:16 "... a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, ..."

The Lord remembers faithfulness to Him, and rewards faithfully (*Matthew 25:23*).

7.3.6. NEHEMIAH, A PRACTICAL BUSINESSMAN, VALUED THOSE WHOLLY EMPLOYED IN SPIRITUAL SERVICE

The contribution such make to a community and city is of great worth, and should fill the hearts of those in business with thankfulness to God, and appreciation for them. Diligently assist them.

7.3.7. HIS DILIGENCE IN REGULATING THE WALL'S PROPER CONSECRATION (Nehemiah 12:27-47)

As far as we know, this was the first time a wall in Israel was dedicated. It had been the practice to dedicate houses (*Deuteronomy 20:5*). This great day was anticipated by the priest who had consecrated the portion of the wall they had repaired (*Nehemiah 3:1*).

7.3.8. IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THE MAIN IDEA BEHIND THE WALL'S CONSECRATION

Nehemiah was a practical man who knew where true security lies. In this act of consecration, he was witnessing to the fact that no walls, no matter how strong, high, wide, deep, or reinforced, can provide ultimate protection from enemies, without the power and protection of God Himself.

David worshipped God as his loving protector(*Psalms 46:1,2*)



Psalm 144:2 *"My lovingkindness and my fortress, My high tower and my deliverer, My shield and the One in whom I take refuge, Who subdues my people under me."*

Our ultimate trust needs to be in God, and not in our business ability, possessions or material assets. Faith in His loving protection and provision is never misplaced.

7.3.9. A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE DEDICATION CAN BE SURVEYED UNDER THESE DIVISIONS

- Dedication preparations (*Nehemiah 12:27-29*)
- Desired purification (*Nehemiah 12:30*)
- Delighting processions (*Nehemiah 12:31-42*)
- Devotional participation (*Nehemiah 12:43*)
- Declared personal (*Nehemiah 12:44-47*)

7.3.10. SPECIAL APPLICATION TO BE APPLIED BY US

When we enjoy success, God should be given thanksgiving and praise. No matter how personally talented we and the team around us may be, we achieve only with the Lord's support and blessing. It is the Lord who gives favour with people, brings to pass favourable times, and provides those who assist us.

In a Christian business, everyone in the company should be involved in thanksgiving for the Lord's blessings that benefit all. What the Lord has given should be devoted to His service. His kingdom sons can render acceptable service owing to the fact that they have been cleansed (*1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 10:22*).

It should be a joy to provide practical assistance for called and anointed ministries.



Nehemiah 12:44 "... Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered."



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Should those occupied in business have a high regard for those employed as ministers of the Lord? (*Nehemiah 12:1-26*).
2. Do you believe that praise and thanksgiving should be given priority? (*Nehemiah 12:24*).

7.4. HIS DILIGENCE IN READILY CORRECTING FORMS OF COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 13:1-31)

7.4.1. HE DILIGENTLY DEALT WITH THE SEPARATION COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 13:1-3)

Nehemiah served as governor of Judea for 12 years, after which he returned to the king of Persia. Upon his return, he found to his sorrow, that the Jews had gradually abandoned their covenant to carefully obey God's law (*Nehemiah 10:28-29*). Formerly, upon the reading of the law, they had:



Nehemiah 13:3 *"... separated from Israel all the mixed multitude. "*

Once again they neglected to be obedient in being a separate people. The mixed multitude was always a snare to

Israel (*Exodus 12:38; Numbers 11:4*). For the restriction of the Ammonite and Moabite, see *Deuteronomy 23:3-6*.

New birth, not nationality, makes us one in the Church.



Galatians 3:28 *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

There are separations in gatherings of the Lord's people, that should scripturally be carried out today.

That Of Separation From False Teachers Who Deny The Doctrine Of Christ



2 John 10 *"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him;"*



Titus 3:10-11 *"Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned."*

(*1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18*).

That Of Separation From Immoral People And Those Whose Conduct Is Unbecoming In Christ



1 Corinthians 5:11 *"But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a*

reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person."

That Of Separation From Those Who Refuse To Repent And Be Reconciled



Matthew 18:17 *"And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."*

That Of Separation From Those Who Cause Divisions And Offences



Romans 16:17 *"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."*

There is a price to pay for compromising these principles of separation. Business people need to apply them before binding themselves in some disastrous partnership.

7.4.2. HE DILIGENTLY DEALT WITH THE TEMPLE COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 13:4-9)



Nehemiah 13:7 *"And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God."*

Eliashib, the high priest, compromised the people and the Temple of God by providing an apartment there. This was not only an act of appeasement towards an enemy, it was desecration of the house of the Lord.

Compromise Of God's Word robs the people of the truth of God's word and of direct guidance from God. Sadly, one in high office can, through compromise, lead people into sinful disobedience of God, and its grave consequences. Nehemiah acted decisively and used his full authority.



Nehemiah 13:8,9 *"... I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. 9 Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God ..."*

To hold back when those in privileged office blatantly sin, is to condone the offence. God's law, though neglected and disobeyed, remains relevant. When the need to amend wrongs arises, it needs to be carried out with decisiveness, accurately and with the Word's authority.

7.4.3. HE DILIGENTLY DEALT WITH THE TITHING COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 13:10-14)

With his usual promptness, exactness and forthrightness, Nehemiah dealt with the support of the Levites.



Nehemiah 13:10 *"And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field."*

The cause of their withdrawal was mainly owing to the peoples' selfishness in holding back for themselves what was

really God's. Malachi, at this time, reproved them soundly for withholding the tithes and offerings.



Malachi 3:8 *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings."*

"Two tithes were required: an annual tithe for the maintenance of the Levites (*Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:21*) and a second tithe brought to Jerusalem for the Lord's feast (*Deuteronomy 14:22*) every third year. However, the second tithe was kept at home and used for the poor (*Deuteronomy 14:28*). One's use of money is often a barometer of his spirituality (*1 John 3:17*)." **Ryrie**

Compromise in tithes and offerings robs God, ourselves and the poor. Faithfulness advances the kingdom of God, and brings God's blessing raining down upon us (*Malachi 3:10*). A further explanation of this is given in my book: [Giving According To God's Intentions](#)

The positive steps of correction taken by Nehemiah:

- Confrontation with the leadership (*Nehemiah 13:11*)
- Brought back the Levites to serving (*Nehemiah 13:11*)
- Renewed zeal in payment of tithes and offerings (*Nehemiah 13:12*)
- Selected and appointed good administrators (*Nehemiah 13:13*)

These men were faithful, able, had good reputations, and were exact in their ministry of distribution to their brethren. Nehemiah's prayer indicates his special delight in working for God, and that he knew God to be a rewarder of faithful service (*Nehemiah 13:14*).



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Did the consecration of the walls indicate where Nehemiah and the people put their trust, in God for protection? (*Nehemiah 12:27-47. Psalm 144:2*).
2. Do you think the church needs to be warned about its separation compromise? (*Nehemiah 13:1-3*).
3. How important is it to deal with compromise of God's Word by someone in high office? (*Nehemiah 13:4-9*).
4. Is it beneficial to God's people to support those called to give full time to God's service? (*Nehemiah 13: 10-14*).

5. Do you think it is right to say "One's use of money is often a barometer of his spirituality"?

7.4.4. HE DILIGENTLY DEALT WITH THE SABBATH COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 13:15-22)

By working and allowing trade on the Sabbath, the people were breaking the covenant they had made with God (*Nehemiah 10:30*).

Nehemiah records:



Nehemiah 13:15 *"In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into*

Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions."

Once again Nehemiah had a well thought out plan of correction, which he executed with diligence, having warned the offenders (*Nehemiah 13:15*). He dealt with leaders first (*Nehemiah 13:17*), giving them a solemn warning (*Nehemiah 13:18; Jeremiah 17:21*). He then arranged for the city gates to be closed on the Sabbath (*Nehemiah 13:19*). He threatened to punish traders who opened a market on the Sabbath outside the city walls (*Nehemiah 13:20-21*). He placed Levite guards at the gates on Sabbaths (*Nehemiah 13:22*), and marked it as holy service by insisting they cleanse themselves for the work. Guarding the city gates was to be regarded as holy as standing guard in the Temple. Then he asked the Lord in prayer, to take account of what he had done, knowing that he was truly accountable to God.

Practical Applications For Our Conduct:

- In business conduct, responsibility must be accepted to correct deviation from God's Word.
- To know about sinful practices and to fail to warn, is to become partner in the guilt (*Nehemiah 13:17*).
- Penalties for wrongdoing act as deterrents to others and promote right-doing.
- Godliness in business must be pursued with bold, impartial and energetic action.
- We should gladly want the Lord to remember all our actions.

- What we do should be done with an eye to future continuance.
 - Do not despise through neglect what God created for us (*Mark 2:27*).
 - We need worship and fellowship (*Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10*).
-

7.4.5. HE DILIGENTLY DEALT WITH THE MARRIAGE COMPROMISE (Nehemiah 13:23-31)



Nehemiah 13:23 "*In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:*"

Mixed marriages had erupted again (See notes on *Nehemiah 10:30*). They did not keep their promise to God. Even one of the high priest's grandsons was guilty of breaking the Word of God on this issue (*Nehemiah 13:28*). The children of these marriages could not speak Hebrew (*Nehemiah 13:24*). Purity of faith, morality, and faithfulness to God were seriously threatened.

Nehemiah carried out vigorous action to deal with this blatant compromising of God's Word, and their failure to keep their word. He dealt firmly with the offenders (*Nehemiah 13:25*): contended with them, pronounced them cursed and physically punished them. The beard was a sign of respect, to pluck it out was therefore a gesture of utter contempt. He spoke God's Word on the matter, and reminded them that foreign wives had proved to be Solomon's downfall (*Nehemiah 13:26*). He dismissed the high priest's grandson, chasing him away (*Nehemiah 13:28*).

He regarded this wrong as so destructive that he exercised passion, indignation and zeal - and even resorted to physical force.

His zeal reminds us of Jesus, who overturned the money-changers' tables and drove them from the Temple with a whip (*Matthew 21:12-13*).

Practical Applications Would Include The Following Things:

- Marriages should be unions in the Lord (*1 Corinthians 7:39*).
- God's Word should govern our conduct.
- Standards should be God-glorifying.
- A high standard of discipline needs to be maintained.
- Discipline of others must be in accordance with God's Word.
- When anger has to be expressed, it needs to be righteously exercised, as exemplified by Jesus.
- Unless there is leadership by example, standards deteriorate.
- Let God deal ultimately with unrepentant defilers and wrongdoers (*Nehemiah 13:29*).
- Do everything possible to assign duties and each to his service (*Nehemiah 13:30*).
- Encourage sacrificial service and fruitfulness (*Nehemiah 13:31*).
- Know that the Lord will work all things together for good (*Nehemiah 13:31; Romans 8:28*).

8. SOME OF THE OUTSTANDING QUALITIES OF NEHEMIAH'S EXAMPLE AS GOD'S BUSINESSMAN

- He was a strong leader.
 - He was exemplary in conduct, commanding the respect of king, nobles and people.
 - He was devoted to God.
 - He loved God's law.
 - He saturated work with prayer.
 - He feared God but did not fear man.
 - He displayed great courage.
 - He was not put off course by opposition.
 - He loved people and cared about their needs.
 - He showed impartiality in dealing with people.
 - He had vision and overview.
 - He never avoided responsibility.
 - He exercised tact with decisiveness.
 - He had tremendous ability to inspire and encourage others.
 - He was a skilful organiser and detailed planner.
 - He was a great builder and adept at reconstruction.
 - He was an outstanding administrator.
 - He had ability to deputize and delegate.
-



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERACTION

1. Would you regard the breaking of covenant with God to be very serious and consequential? (*Nehemiah 13:15-22; 10:30*).
2. Do you gladly want the Lord to remember all your actions? (*Nehemiah 13:22*).
3. Is it right to break your promise to God? The Israelites unkept promise was mixed marriage. What promises to God are not kept today? (*Nehemiah 13:23*).

4. What lack of standards would you say merits discipline by the church?
5. What impresses you most about Nehemiah's example as God's businessman?