

Laborers Together (2)

Text: Nehemiah 3:1-32

Introduction:

1. 1 Corinthians 3:9 *“For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.”*
2. The commitment of the people in Chapter 2 to the work is now bearing fruit in action.
3. This chapter reveals that the people “had a mind to work” and the job was done in 52 days, a phenomenal achievement.
4. Overview of map: Northern wall (Vs. 1-7); Western Wall (Vs. 8-13); Southern Wall (Vs. 14) & Eastern Wall (Vs. 15-32)

As we analyze this phenomenal team of workers we will note 4 key ingredients that contributed to their success in the work of God:

I. Cohesion (unity)

There were two things that contributed to their unity

A. Direction –Guidance/Leadership

B. Destination – Goal/Objective

C. Summary: What a picture is presented here of a large group of people working harmoniously towards a clear objective. Everyone had a clear understanding of what needed to be done. They were not all doing what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25)

II. Motivation

A. The Sense of Mission

B. The Safety of Family

C. The Skills of Individuals

III. Participation

D.L. Moody: “A great many people have got a false idea about the church. They have got an idea that the church is a place to rest in...to get into a nicely cushioned pew, and contribute to the charities, listen to the minister, and do their share to keep the church out of bankruptcy, is all they want. The idea of work for them – actual work in the church – never enters their minds.” The word ‘work’ appears 21 times in the Book of Nehemiah.

A. The Diversity of the participants

1. The High Priest, priests & Levites (Vs. 1, 17, 22) representing the spiritual leaders of the nation.

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2. Son of one of the Apothecaries (Vs. 8). These were the perfume makers. E.g. A special anointing oil for the service of the temple (Ex. 30:25, 35). Sweet odors and spices for the purpose of embalming (2 Chr. 16:14)
3. Rulers (Vs. 9, 12, 14-19)
 - a. A prominent feature of this work. Those in positions of leadership did not deem themselves to be above the work. Their presence amongst the common people was powerfully motivating.
 - b. One of the rulers repaired the dung gate (Vs. 14)
 - c. Nehemiah, the highest authority in the country at that time set a similar example (4:23) Note: Those with the gift of organization need to remember to get their hands dirty as well!
 - d. Servant Leadership is the model the Bible presents – Luke 22:24-26
 - e. Leaders need to practice what they preach to others.
4. Goldsmiths & Merchants (Vs. 8, 31-32)
 - a. These would represent the business men of today
 - b. 1 Tim. 6:17-19 *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they **do good**, that they be **rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**”*
5. Many others either **unnamed** (Vs. 2, 5, 7, 26) or **unknown** (Vs. 7)
 - a. These men may be largely unknown to us but they obviously were not unknown to God as He chose to note their participation in this great work in His eternal Word.
 - b. Many of us will not be remembered for our labors for the Lord in this life. Many of us will be obscure so far as reputation amongst men is concerned. This matters little as our service is known in heaven (Heb. 6:10) and it is the “well done” of our Saviour that is our goal and aim (Matt. 25:21).
 - c. Therefore, It is wise for us not to compare ourselves with others – 2 Cor 10:12 *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*

B. The Degrees of participation

1. Note: On the whole, there was tremendous participation but even then we still see some degrees of participation we can learn from.
2. Some didn't participate at all! (Vs. 5) Unlike the other rulers named in the passage, these nobles felt they were above such labors.

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3. Some went the extra mile (Vs. 19, 21, 24, 27, 30). Many choose to do their assigned part and no more. These folk were available to do extra over and above what they were assigned. They were second mile people.
4. Some worked with passion (Vs. 20) 'earnestly' = means to glow warm, wax hot

IV. Organization

A. An ordered approach to the work

1. 1 Cor. 14:33, 40 *"For God is not the author of confusion...Let all things be done decently and in order."*
2. Corinthian context: A divided, carnal, yet gifted church!
3. 'decently' = proper, fitting 'order' = idea of arrangement
4. We need to plan our work and work our plan!
5. We need to approach the work of the Lord with a "striving for excellence" attitude
6. Nehemiah divided this massive project into 42 work areas and assigned teams to each one. No one man can achieve a task of this magnitude on his own.
7. Our job is to find our place of service on God's construction team and build.
8. We need to learn to see our part in relation to the whole!

B. A overseen approach to the work

1. Leadership essential. This is why our chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, appoints under-shepherds for His local churches.
2. Eph. 4:11-12 *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*
3. Godly leadership a blessing, not a blight.

Conclusion:

1. Are you a contributor or a spectator in God's work?
2. Do you see the value of your contribution, small though it may seem, to the great objectives of the local church?
3. Are we striving for excellence in what we do for the Lord? Do we approach it in a disciplined and structured way or are we careless and lazy?