

HOW TO STAY MOTIVATED FOR GOD
Next Steps Devotional Guide — Nehemiah 2:9-20
Sermon Series: Nehemiah > Repair, Rebuild & Restore
Sunday, February 26, 2023
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1. Everyone of us at some time in our life has heard some great motivational speech either from a coach, or a teacher or a parent or politician or pastor or someone else. Who in your life gave you such a motivational speech or some other form of motivation that you just kept pushing forward when you wanted to either quit or retreat? What has been the impact on your life ever since? If they are still alive, see if you can find a way to thank them.
2. Read Nehemiah 2:9-10 in your sermon notes. When God calls you to a project, or ministry, you have to remember that with every opportunity comes opposition. Why do you think we forget this?
 - a. In the case of Nehemiah, he has 3 major foes or opposers: Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem, the Arab. We learn about the first 2 earlier in our passage and the 3rd one later in our passage. For all three, their opposition comes from 1,500 years of jealousy, envy, bitterness and resentment. In your sermon notes, read the explanation for each of these and why they had these feelings. In some way, this is a “family feud” that centers around God’s choosing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be the means by which His covenant to form a group of people to be God’s voice in the world. Have you ever had some of these feelings against a family member or friend? Why? Against anyone in the church? Why?
 - b. Take your Bible and read [Isaiah 55:8-9](#). C. S. Lewis said in [The Problem Of Pain](#), “*God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.*” What do you think he means by this and how does this relate to hurt, pain, and disappointment based on [Isaiah 55:8-9](#)?
3. Everyone knows we should get adequate rest. Most of us are going full-speed, losing sleep, rest, relaxation and solitude. Nehemiah had taken 4 months to travel across harsh and dangerous terrain from Suza (Persia) to Jerusalem (Judah).
 - a. Read [Nehemiah 2:11-12a](#) in your sermon notes. He took 3 days to even announce why he was there. He arrives with a Persian military escort and then kind of goes into hiding. If you had been living there, what do you think you would have thought and why?
 - b. Take your Bible and read [Galatians 4:22-23](#). This passage is about the “Fruit of the Spirit.” This is spiritual fruit God produces in you. You cannot produce this on your own; only the Holy Spirit can. Notice that one of the fruits is patience. Why do you think we tend to see this fruit (i.e., patience) less in others? Nehemiah takes 3 days to prepare himself with patience for the task. What is a task God has given you that you need to allow God to grow His “Fruit of the Spirit” (i.e., patience) in you before you act and why?
 - c. Take your Bible and read [James 1:5-6](#). Nehemiah is very wise. Read [Nehemiah 2:11-12a](#) in your sermon notes. One of the ways he shows he is wise is that he took the time to recharge his batteries for the burden he carries. Do you take the time to recharge your batteries for the task God has given you or are you “*burning the candles at both ends*?” Explain.
 - d. Read [Nehemiah 2:11-12a](#) again in your sermon notes. Nehemiah showed he was wise in a second way: he waited to assess the level of willingness of the Jews in Jerusalem to work with him to rebuild, repair and restore the wall around Jerusalem. Think about a ministry team you are part of at church or a team at your job or school. How often do you assess the willingness of your team member’s to work with you to do what God has called you to do? If you do not, why? If not, how could you in a subtle way do this?
 - e. Read [Nehemiah 2:12b-15](#) in your sermon notes. Nehemiah did not take other people’s word about the condition of the wall around Jerusalem. He grabbed a few people at night and took a tour from the south part of the wall counterclockwise. Though he did not survey the entire perimeter of the wall, he got a feel of what would be necessary. If you are involved in a ministry, how often do you step back and survey or investigate to get an impression to know fully what it takes for you to do what God has called you to do?
 - f. Take your Bible and read Jesus’ words in [Luke 14:25-33](#). Jesus is talking about the cost of discipleship. The point is: count the cost before you start. This is what Nehemiah did. He “counted the cost” to know what price would have to be paid to rebuild, restore and repair the wall. Now apply this principle Jesus gives to your own life, your ministry, your work, your marriage, your parenting and etc. What did you learn?
4. Christian pastor and author Oswald Chambers, who wrote, *My Utmost For His Highest*, wrote this in a publication called *Spiritual Leadership*:
 - a. “*The man who is impatient with weakness will be defective in his leadership. The evidence of our strength lies not in streaking ahead but in a willingness to adapt our stride to the slower pace of our weaker brethren, while not forfeiting our lead. If we run too far ahead, we lose our power to influence. This is the penalty of leadership.*”¹ Use this quote to evaluate your own life? What did you discover, learn, need to change?
 - b. Now read [Nehemiah 2:16](#) in your sermon notes. If you were to ask someone to help you with a ministry, if they know who this will bring glory to God, they are more likely to commit to do it. Do you typically do this? Why or why not? How would explaining to them how this brings glory to God might convince them to help?
 - c. The Hebrew text implies that after Nehemiah made his midnight inspection of the wall, some amount of time had elapsed before he said anything to anyone. We have a tendency that when we are either in the dark about something or we doubt what we have been told, we begin to speculate — we create our own “conspiracy theories” (i.e., the grassy knoll with Kennedy’s assassination; the Challenger exploding; how and why Princess Diana died; UFOs at Roswell or Area 51). Do you think this was wise for Nehemiah to wait even as conspiracy theories spread? Why or why not?
 - d. Read [Nehemiah 2:17-18](#) in your sermon notes as well as the explanation for the Hebrew word translated as “disgrace or dejection or reproach” depending on your own Bible translation. Nehemiah holds nothing back. He makes it clear to all these leaders and officials, both Jewish and Persian and anyone else listening that the only reason the wall was

¹ Quoted by Charles R. Swindoll, [The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart](#), p. 237.

destroyed is because of the shame the Jews brought upon God for their sin, rebellion and disobedience. How and why was this the right approach?

- e. Read Nehemiah 2:18 again in your sermon notes. Nehemiah suggests that if they, himself included, would repair, restore and the rebuild the wall this would bring glory to God and remove their shame as well as the shame they brought against God. How do you think rebuilding, restoring and repairing the wall would remove the shame and get them blessed from God? **Hint:** This is not just about repairing, rebuilding and restoring the wall — there is a much bigger picture Nehemiah sees and what is that?
5. Nehemiah certainly had great people skills. Though he may not have a degree in structural engineering, he knows how to motivate people because he had an honest attitude. Read Nehemiah 2:17a again in your sermon notes.
 - a. Some have said that Nehemiah's speech reflected optimism, not pessimism. Do you see that? If so, how?
 - b. Nehemiah does not sugar-coat the problem. He didn't start by saying, *"I've seen the walls, and it's not all that bad."* That's what you call an optimist—a person who takes a favorable view of everything. But that's better than being a pessimist, isn't it? Someone described a pessimist as one who is seasick during the entire voyage of life. Would people who know you describe you as an optimist or a pessimist or a realist? What is the difference in each of these terms? You could call Nehemiah a true, genuine, undeniable realist. He did not overlook problems, nor was he overwhelmed by them. If Nehemiah is a realist rather than a pessimist, or an optimist, how does his statement in Nehemiah 2:17 reflect that?
 - c. What can you learn and apply to your own life from his realism that could help you?
6. Using his great people skills, Nehemiah identified with them in an attitude of humility. We see this in his use of the pronouns "we" and "us." Read Nehemiah 2:17 again in your sermon notes. He did not say, *"Man, are you in a bad situation! How could you be so irresponsible to God? What you need to do is to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that you will no longer be a reproach."* How does including yourself in the problem help motivate people to do something?
7. Read Nehemiah 2:17b again in your sermon notes. Nehemiah used offering to them an honorable way to participate in the rebuilding, restoring and repairing of the wall for the glory of God. Read the explanation for the Hebrew word translated as "disgrace" or "derision" or "reproach" depending on your own personal translation. Instead of using extrinsic motivation — as governor — he could force them to do this. Instead, Nehemiah chose to use intrinsic motivation — he created a motivation from within their own hearts to do this for the glory of God. When has someone tried to use extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on you? What happened. Which do you prefer?
8. Read Nehemiah 2:18 in your sermon notes. Nehemiah said, *"I didn't come to punish or kill or imprison or hurt anyone. God, the God our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has not forgotten you dear friends. God has sent me here with the authority and help of King Artaxerxes to restore our faith and obedience in Him and to remove the shame and reproach our lives and out city says about God as seen in this devastated and destroyed wall."*
 - a. Why do you think this worked?
 - b. When you serve, when you give, do you do it for the glory of God? Explain.
9. Read Nehemiah 2:19 in your sermon notes. A third opposer is added to the previous two. Geshem, the Arab joins Sanballat (the Horonite/Moabite) and Tobiah (the Ammonite). Three different men/governors who were rejected by God. God chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the means to establish His covenant. God rejected the two sons of Lot (i.e., Abraham's nephew) conceived via incest and Ishmael, conceived via Abraham's wife's (i.e., Sarah's) concubine.
 - a. For 1,500 years a bitter, resentful and angry hatred was spewed had against Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. Are you nursing or harboring any grudge against anyone? If so, why? God cannot work through you until He works in you. Would you let it go and forgive them? Forgiveness is not saying that what they did wasn't wrong or even sinful. Forgiveness simply frees you. Will you forgive them? Why or why not?
 - b. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 16:24 in your sermon notes. Jesus Christ warned His disciples that the object which would grace their necks would not be a garland but a cross. So, why do you think we act and believe as if it should be garland rather than a cross.
10. Nehemiah faced two types of opposition: public ridicule (i.e., read Nehemiah 2:19b in your sermon notes) and personal intimidation (i.e., read Nehemiah 2:19c in your sermon notes).
 - a. Pastor Kelly gave his own definition of spiritual discouragement: *"Spiritual discouragement is the devil's and his demons attempt to use criticism, ridicule and rejection from others to get you to get your focus off of God and His purpose for your life and on yourself (i.e., your hurt)."* Pastor Kelly said that our culture calls this a "pity party," but God calls it idolatry. Why?
 - b. Read Ephesians 6:11-12 in your sermon notes. How does this help you deal with discouragement?
11. Read Nehemiah 2:20 in your sermon notes. Nehemiah does not mince words with the opposition. In your sermon notes, you were given six (6) ways Nehemiah dealt with the opposition. Read each of these and all the explanations of the Hebrew terms associated with them. How does this help you deal with opposition when you are doing something for God?
12. You were given three (3) ways to to avoid the danger of discouragement. Read each of these and the Bible verses attached to each point in your sermon notes.
 - a. Pastor Kelly told a story about a kid who was a bully. Each day this bully would demand Jack Handey, another kid, to give him his lunch money. Jack Handey said, *"To many people feel it is just easier to pay the bully than it is to learn how to defeat him."*² Do you agree and why?
 - b. Do you agree with this statement: *"There is no opportunity from heaven without opposition from hell. This means that opportunity is close at hand."* Why or why not?
 - c. If you could go back in time to do something for God that you didn't do due to discouragement, what is it? If you knew then what you know now, what would you do differently and why?

² For the full story, go to this link: <https://www.family-times.net/illustration/Leadership/201554/>.