

- The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us the accounts of the people of Israel returning to the Jerusalem to restore their once proud name. Ezra's book focuses mostly on the spiritual rebuilding of Israel, while Nehemiah focuses mainly on the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall. The first six chapters of Nehemiah could be summarized like this:
  - Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem's desolation and seeks to return. **(Chapter 1)**
    - Nehemiah hears of Jerusalem's condition and is heartbroken. **(1:3)**
    - He prays to God for forgiveness for the people's sins and for strength as he goes before the king . **(1:4ff)**
  - Nehemiah goes before the king, returns to Jerusalem, and surveys the situation. **(Chapter 2)**
    - Nehemiah goes before the king to petition to go to Jerusalem. **(2:1-10)**
    - Nehemiah goes out to survey the situation and it was pretty bad. **(2:11ff)**
  - Nehemiah and the people begin the work and encounter difficulties. **(Chapters 3-6)**
    - Sanballat mocks the workers and Nehemiah as being nothing. **(4:1-3)**
    - Nehemiah has to deal with problems within his own people. **(5)**
    - Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem plot against Nehemiah and the work. **(6)**
  - The work is completed. **(6:15,16)**
- This is certainly an interesting story, but what can we take away from it? I believe the key take away and the key reason for the success of Nehemiah and the workers is found in **4:6**. The people had a mind to work! This was so important for these people and this is also important for us as Christians because we have work that we need to be doing. Multiple times throughout the New Testament Christians are described as workers. Jesus tells of how His people needed to recognize the white fields and be good workers for His cause. **(Matt. 9:37,38)** Paul uses the description of worker often in his writings. Paul, Apollos **(I Cor. 3:9)**, Titus **(II Cor. 8:23)**, and Timothy **(II Tim. 2:15)** were all described as workers for the Lord, and the same thing could and should be said about us. Our work is to follow the instructions of our Lord and take Gospel to those who are around us and in need of it's saving grace. **(Matt. 28:18-20)** We can do that work well if we have that time of mindset to work like the workers of Nehemiah had. Let's look at 3 necessities to having a mind to work that will help us accomplish our work as Christians.

### 3 Necessities to Having a Mind to Work

#### **I. We must understand and believe in the work.**

- A. Without understanding or believing the work, we may not be truly motivated to get it done.
  1. Nehemiah's workers knew that Jerusalem was not to be the laughing stock of the land, so they put their minds to the work and they got it done in a short 52 days.
  2. If we don't believe that people need the Gospel or if we don't believe in the power of the Gospel then we are not going to accomplish the work.
- B. We must understand that we have a tremendous responsibility to share the soul saving message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We must not be ashamed of the Gospel! **(Rom. 1:16)**
- C. When we recognize what we have been given then we shouldn't be able to stop sharing that with others.
  1. The Apostles said that they couldn't but speak about the things that they had seen. **(Acts 4:18-20)**
  2. They felt compelled to speak about Jesus and they were willing to suffer for that cause.
  3. They had received the forgiveness of sins, they recognized the need of others.
  4. They knew that hell was waiting for the sin stained soul, and they loved the souls of others.
- D. Do our actions show that we have the same mindset of the earliest Christians?
  1. We say, "Of course I believe in God and Jesus and I obey His commands..... but I just don't like sharing my faith with others."
  2. If that is your mindset then you are lacking in saving faith, and your faith is either extremely weak or completely dead. **(James 2:14ff)**
  3. If we truly grasp the power of the Gospel and every soul's need for it then we will share our faith with others. That sharing of our faith will prove that we understand and believe in the work that has been set before us.

#### **II. We must commit to the work.**

- A. Commitment is absolutely necessary for the our work to be accomplished in the best way possible.
  1. Nehemiah and his workers were absolutely committed to the work. They were so committed that they finished it in a short 52 days.
  2. Early Christians didn't a noncommittal mindset. They were committed fully to the work of the spreading of the Gospel.

3. We can see the very extent of their commitment through the results of the efforts and how it is described in **Acts 5:28** where we read that the disciples were turning the world upside down by their teaching of the Gospel.
  4. Their success was very much indicative of their mindset to constantly be about the work of the Lord. They were so busy that we see thousands of people converted and **Acts 8:4** tells us that as they were scattered they took the Gospel with them and even more were baptized into Jesus Christ.
- B. We might not have this kind of success because we don't take the Gospel TO people as they did.
1. Even when they were scattered they took the Gospel with them and to people.
  2. Do we give the effort to take the Gospel to people or do we just sit back and wait for things to happen?
  3. We must give every effort to create opportunities to share the Gospel. We must be zealous go-getters for the Kingdom's cause.
  4. Paul is a great example of a man who went about creating opportunities to share the Gospel.
    - a) He went down to the riverside where he knew people would be so he could share the Gospel. Through his efforts, Lydia and all her household were saved. (**Acts 16:13-15**)
    - b) Paul made it a habit to go to places where he could share the Gospel, specifically the synagogue. (**Acts 17:1,2**)
    - c) Paul gave great effort for the Kingdom's sake by going on his preaching journeys. (**Acts 13-19**)
  5. Paul said that we should imitate him as he imitated Christ, and no better way can we do that than to imitate his zeal and commitment towards the work of the Kingdom.
  6. A good way to test that commitment is to simply ask yourself every night if you have put in a good days work for the Lord. If you can't honestly say that then you probably are not committed to the work as you should be.

### III. We must overcome difficulties to the work.

- A. Every good endeavor is going to face opposition and difficulties.
1. Nehemiah had to fight and overcome difficulties that were put in his way of accomplishing the mission of rebuilding the wall.
    - a) To begin with, the wall was in absolute shambles.
    - b) Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem added to the difficulties by opposing Nehemiah and the work being done by trying to sabotage and intimidate him out of the work. (**Neh. 2:19; 6:1-9**)
    - c) The people were being unruly and Nehemiah had to overcome that.
  2. The early Christians had difficulties in their work. The Apostles continually ran into issues while trying to do their work for the Lord. We read of many of Paul's issues that he overcame throughout New Testament books.
    - a) He overcame physical suffering. (**II Cor. 11:22-29**)
    - b) He overcame rejection. (**Felix, Acts 24:25 & Agrippa, Acts 26:28**)
    - c) He overcame brethren falling away. (**Demos, II Tim. 4:10**)
    - d) He overcame problems within the church. (**Immorality, I Cor. 5**)
  3. Even through very difficult situations Paul continued to have a mind to work to get great things done for the Kingdom.
- B. We must have that same kind of resolve and not allow difficulties to deter us from our work as Christians.
1. Sometimes we allow obstacles to completely stop us from doing the work of the Lord.
    - a) Someone might reject the truth and so we throw up our hands and give up right away.
    - b) Something rude or hurtful might be said to us because of our efforts so we just give up.
    - c) A brother or sister might fall away so we become discouraged and stop.
    - d) There might be difficulties within the church and we think its just too difficult so we stop.
    - e) We might not have a lot of short term success so we give up on the long term success.
    - f) We're scared of losing our relationships with family and friends so we don't discuss the needs of their souls.
  2. We cannot be stopped so easily! We must have that resilient attitude that helps us to overcome obstacles in the work. Having a mind to work means that we fight through difficulties of the work.
  3. Small conversion numbers doesn't automatically mean a lack of success. Even the Apostles and early Christians had some reject the truth.
    - a) Paul and Barnabas go to teach the Jews in Antioch. (**Acts 13:46**)
    - b) The message is rejected by the Jews.
    - c) Paul and Barnabas don't give up. Instead, they take the message to the Gentiles who gladly accepted.
  4. We must have that same type of "on to the next" attitude towards the work of the Kingdom.

We have been given a great work to do in this life. We are God's messengers to give this dying world the saving message of the Gospel. If we don't do that as Christians then 1) we are failing God and 2) we are failing others who might be searching. May God help us and may we use the examples of Nehemiah and the early Christians as encouragements to do the best we can for the Lord and have the proper mind to work for the Kingdom.