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Have you ever been certain you were supposed to do something for God, yet you had trouble getting it completed? Perhaps other activities or challenges arose, and you got distracted. To stay on course with our godly goals, we want to be aware of distractions and learn how to handle them. The Book of Nehemiah is a clear record that shows a fellow laborer with God who stayed on track with his goal of rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem, not allowing himself to get distracted from his responsibility. Let's take a glimpse into this record to see some of the ways he stayed on course to accomplish his godly goal.

When Nehemiah saw a need to help God's people, he went to God in prayer. The record begins with Nehemiah finding out that his brethren in Jerusalem were in great affliction and needed help and deliverance. The wall of Jerusalem had been broken down, and the gates had been burned with fire (Nehemiah 1:3). Though this news was distressing to Nehemiah, he knew he needed to do something about it, so he sought God's help by prayer. He needed guidance and direction on what to do, so he "sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (Nehemiah 1:4).

God heard Nehemiah's prayer and opened the door for him to lead the way in rebuilding the destroyed walls and gates around this great city. Nehemiah had his goal set before him, but in order to initiate this large and complex project, he had a few obstacles to overcome. To begin with, he was a captive of war who had been transported to a foreign land, hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1,2). He did not have the resources or manpower to accomplish the job. Yet God answered his prayers—Nehemiah's employer, a pagan king, not only granted Nehemiah's request to go to Jerusalem, but he also helped him secure safe passage and the needed materials.

*Nehemiah 2:8:*

*...And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.*

Once Nehemiah reached Jerusalem, he made an on-site assessment of the job before him (Nehemiah 2:13-15), made a plan, and shared the vision with the Judeans there. They heartily agreed to “rise up and build,” and “they strengthened their hands for *this good work*” (Nehemiah 2:17,18). Now this was *their* godly goal; however, as they proceeded to carry out this great work for God, they faced obstacles and had to persist in believing. How did they do this?

When the wall was half-built, the Judean builders faced pressure from enemies of God’s people, but Nehemiah involved them in prayer to handle this distraction.

*Nehemiah 4:6-9:*

*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.*

*But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,*

*And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.*

*Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.*

A conspiracy of unbelievers was determined to thwart the Judeans’ plans. These unbelievers did whatever they could to distract God’s people and stop their deliverance from being accomplished. But Nehemiah and his people prayed, and then Nehemiah gave them godly direction on how to protect themselves from a threatening enemy. God was their Fellow Laborer and helped them stay on track! Nehemiah 4:15 records the result: “And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.”

Another distraction arose as they were building, which could have easily gotten them off track from accomplishing the goal. It came from the ranks of the Judeans. Nehemiah 5 records that because of a famine, some of the Judeans had borrowed money, mortgaged their lands, vineyards, and houses, and even sold their children into servitude to other Judeans in order to survive (Nehemiah 5:5). However,

Nehemiah boldly confronted those who were exploiting the hardships of their brethren and exhorted them to restore what had been taken. As a result, those who had gained from these ungodly practices heeded Nehemiah's instruction and corrected their ways (Nehemiah 5:12).

More distractions occurred as they were building the wall, but Nehemiah and the Judean believers persisted. Nehemiah 6 tells us the result.

*Nehemiah 6:15:*

*So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.*

The wall was finished in fifty-two days! How did they accomplish this tremendous feat? Nehemiah and the builders kept God involved as their Fellow Laborer by going to Him in prayer. And Nehemiah kept them on course by handling the various distractions with bold believing.

We can stay on course just as Nehemiah did as we pursue our godly goals. Once we know the goal we are heading toward, we can keep God involved in prayer to help, guide, and direct us; and then we can take believing action to handle any distraction that steers us away from our goal. With God as our Fellow Laborer, we can accomplish our godly goals!

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