



Working Together

Nehemiah 3

The Work

- ❑ After Nehemiah presented his proposal to his fellow Jews (2:17-18a), they responded, “Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work” (2:18b).
- ❑ Nehemiah 3 provides a record of the rebuilding work. The record starts at the Sheep Gate in the north end of the wall (3:1) and progresses in a counterclockwise direction until it comes back to the Sheep Gate (3:32).¹

The Workers

- ❑ Consider the following two questions as you read Nehemiah 3:1-32.

1. Who were the workers? What were their occupations or normal jobs?²

2. Where did the workers live? From what places did they come?³



- ❑ The workers came from various occupations and places. Some came from towns and areas outside Jerusalem while others worked on the wall near their homes or businesses. Some of the workers were women (3:12). One man was noted for his enthusiastic work ethic (3:20)⁴ while others refused to join in the work (3:5).
3. As you reflect on Nehemiah 3, what impresses you about the workers and the rebuilding project?

¹ A map of the wall is provided above. It should be noted that many of the ancient wall's details are unknown. Thus other maps may show some of the features at different locations.

² High priest, priests, goldsmiths, perfume-makers, rulers, temple servants, Levites, merchants.

³ Jericho, Tekoa, Gibeon, Mizpah, and Zanoah (towns spread throughout Judah), Jerusalem and surrounding region.

⁴ Though many of the people 'worked with all their heart' (4:6).

How Did it Work?

- ❑ Many different people from different places worked together to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. It was a huge job, but it took only 52 days! (6:15)
- 4. What was needed for this rebuilding project to be so successful?⁵
Think through the process.



- ❑ Rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem was important for various reasons. Of course, the wall provided protection and security for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but it was also important symbolically. It signified recovery from the humiliation of destruction suffered because of Israel's sin. It signified the restoration of God's people, who were called to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*Exodus 19:5-6*).⁶

How Does it Apply to Us?

- ❑ The wall rebuilding project is a good example of people working together. In particular, it's a good example of God's people working together to accomplish God's work.
- 5. As Christians, we are called to work together in God's work, but we are different from each other in various ways. How can we work together in unity? What mindset and attitude do we need?
- 6. In Nehemiah 3, it's evident that many of the people worked on portions of the wall near their home, business or other place of interest. How might this example apply to us?⁷

Reflection/Application

- The wall rebuilding project offers lessons for everyone, believer or not. But the Bible says the "buildings" that truly last are built on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 7:24-27). As you "build" in your life, do you want it to last? Do you need to receive Jesus?
- Are you working together with others in God's work? Do you struggle with a sense of unimportance or disunity or pride? Read Philippians 2:1-5 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-30.

⁵ Effective leadership was needed to prepare for, plan and supply the work, and organize and manage the workforce. Many workers were needed, and the workers needed to be committed to a common purpose and goal, and work cooperatively with one another. Most importantly, God's help was needed. As Nehemiah later says, 'this work [was] done with the help of our God' (6:16). This project was made possible because the gracious hand of God was on Nehemiah (2:8, 18). The process not only started with godly concern and prayer, Nehemiah prayed continuously.

⁶ 'kingdom of priests' – called to a special service, to represent God and mediate His presence and blessing to the nations. 'holy nation' – set apart as God's special people (distinct and separate) to be a 'kingdom of priests.' In the New Testament, Christians are called 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2:9). We are His special people, set apart for a special purpose – to know Him and make Him known.

⁷ This may have occurred for practical reasons. Working close to home has its advantages. And while God may call us to distant places, the work God usually wants us to do is where we already are. It's also true that people tend to be more enthusiastic about the portions of a project that directly interest them, and we are usually interested in our own neighborhoods! As a leader, it's wise to assign people to work for which they have enthusiasm. Enthusiastic workers make better workers. May God give us greater enthusiasm for the work He wants us to do!