Introduction: God is searching...

“For the eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the whole earth, that He may strongly support those whose hearts are completely His.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NIV)

... for a select group of people.

The Context of 2 Chronicles 16:9

- **Past “Success”**
  - Asa was a good king at a bad time!

- **A Great Door of Opportunity**
  - Asa’s greatest problem was really his greatest opportunity!

- **A Sad Commentary**
  - Asa started well, but finished poorly!
The Question: Will we answer God’s call to make a significant impact at this pivotal moment in history?

- Our great door of opportunity
- Our vision
- What will it mean for each of us?

1. **MODEL IT**
2. **FOCUS**

The Preview:

In the next five sessions, we will examine the conditions that characterize those whom God strongly supports; those who, over time, develop Holy Ambition.

Our Model = Nehemiah

1The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 3They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.” 4When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:1-4 (NIV)
Prerequisite #1: A DISLOCATED HEART

- What is a dislocated heart?
  A God-given concern for others that PROPELS us out of our COMFORT ZONE. It is a passionate concern for God’s agenda that supersedes our own desires for personal peace and prosperity.

- What does a dislocated heart look like?
  - Exhibit A = Jesus
    Philippians 2:5-13
  - Exhibit B = Paul
    Romans 9:1-3

- How do you develop a dislocated heart?
  1. Honest EVALUATION
  2. Genuine REPENTANCE
  3. CAREFUL Consideration
  4. Ask God for A DISLOCATED HEART
Discussion Questions:

1. What was your initial response to hearing 2 Chronicles 16:9?

2. What kind of people is God searching for?

3. In what ways are we, as a church, at a crossroad right now? Discuss the implications for your life in light of Jesus’ words, “to whom much is given, much is required.”

4. What is a dislocated heart and why is it essential in preparation to answer God’s call in our lives?

5. What specific steps of faith / obedience do you sense God is leading you to develop a dislocated heart? Who could help you on your journey?
Introduction: God is searching…

“For the eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the whole earth, that He may strongly support those whose hearts are completely His.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NIV)

…for a select group of people.

The Question:

What does it take to make a difference for God? What kind of person does He promise to strongly support?

The Answer:

A DISLOCATED heart.

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire." 4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:1-4 (NIV)
What is a dislocated heart?

What does a dislocated heart look like?

How do you develop a dislocated heart?

Prerequisite #2: A **BROKEN SPIRIT**.

Two Timeless Axioms Concerning God’s Character:

- God hates PRIDE 100% of the time. Proverbs 8:13
  James 4:6

- God responds to a DISLOCATED HEART 100% of the time. Psalm 51:16-17
  Isaiah 57:15

How Do We Develop A Broken Spirit?

Our Model = Nehemiah

- A broken spirit begins with a RESTORED VIEW OF GOD.

> “When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel."”

Nehemiah 1:4-6a (NIV)

- **Application:** Worship (i.e. Isaiah 6:1-6)
A broken spirit leads us to an **ACCURATE ASSESSMENT OF YOURSELF**.

6b I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

Nehemiah 1:6b-7 (NIV)

- **Application: Confession** (i.e. James 4:7-10)

A broken spirit results in a renewed commitment to fulfill **GOD’S AGENDA**.

8 Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

10 They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

Nehemiah 1:8-11 (NIV)

- **Application: Intercession** (i.e. James 5:16)
Summary Principles for Impact:

1. We must let God work deeply IN us before He will work significantly THROUGH us!

2. Until we make prayer a PRIORITY, progress and power will never be a REALITY.

3. Difference Makers are not necessarily those with “a lot to give,” but those who make available all they have.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a “broken spirit?” Why do you think God always responds so positively to those who come with a broken spirit?

2. How does one cultivate or develop “a broken spirit?” (See Nehemiah’s model – 3 aspects.)

3. Share one area of your life in which God spoke to you through this message and our time of confession and prayer together.

4. What one thing will you do beginning this week to be a Nehemiah in your world? Tell someone your plan and ask them to check up on you.
Introduction: God is searching…

“And I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and *stand in the gap* before Me for the land that I might not destroy it . . .”

Ezekiel 22:30 (NIV)

… for just one man or woman to “*step out*” and make a difference!

The Question:

Review - What does it take to make a difference for God? What kind of person?

1. The 1st prerequisite to Holy Ambition is a **DISLOCATED** heart.
   - Do you *care*?

2. The 2nd prerequisite to Holy Ambition is a **BROKEN** spirit.
   - Are you *dependent*?

Prerequisite #3:

3. A **RADICAL STEP OF FAITH**.
   - Will you *step out*?
Our Model = Nehemiah

11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

1In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; 2 so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid, 3 but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" 4 The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, 5 and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it." 6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.

Nehemiah 1:11-2:6 (NIV)

Definition:

A radical faith is choosing to “step out” to fulfill God’s clearly defined will at great personal risk and sacrifice.

How do we develop a radical faith?

1. By remembering what faith is and is not. Hebrews 11:1
2. By remembering how deeply God values our faith. Hebrews 11:6

3. By remembering what Jesus taught His followers about a radical faith.
   - Jesus **Called** them to a radical faith. Luke 9:23-27
   - Jesus **Clarified** the object of their faith. Luke 9:28-45
   - Jesus ** Warned** of the dangers of having a radical faith. Luke 9:46-56
   - Jesus **Outlined** the cost of having a radical faith. Luke 9:57-62

4. By remembering you can’t “walk on water if you don’t get out of the boat.” Luke 10:1-27
Holy Ambition
(Part 3)

Summary:

30“I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. 31So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

Ezekiel 22:30-31 (NIV)

Application/Discussion Questions:


2. What might a radical faith look like for you in your present and future ministry?

3. What barriers or fears make stepping out in radical faith difficult for you right now? Are you “hanging onto” anything that keeps you from following Christ? Is it stuff? People? The past?

4. What specific step will you take to begin strengthening your faith? Who would help you follow through on this commitment?
Introduction: Why dreams die

Why is it that so many people intend to do so much, yet usually accomplish so little?
The Answer: GOOD INTENTIONS!

AND

Why is it that others who carefully prepare to do even a little, accomplish so much?

Prerequisite #4: A STRATEGIC PLAN

The Question:

What must happen to our Dislocated Hearts, Broken Spirits, and Radical Faiths to turn our God-given dreams into reality?

1. It must begin with a VISION:

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2. Where God’s agenda is championed, God’s resources are **CHANNELED**:

5 ... and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it." 6 Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time. 7 I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? 8 And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And **because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests**. 9 So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

Nehemiah 2:5-9 (NIV)

3. Your strategic plan must be “birthed” in **PRIVATE**:

11 I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days 12 I set out during the night with a few men. I had **not told anyone** what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. 13 By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, **examining the walls** of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. 14 Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; 15 so I went up the valley by night, **examining the wall**. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate. 16 The officials **did not know** where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet **I had said nothing** to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

Nehemiah 2:11-16 (NIV)
3 keys to “birthing” your strategic plan:

1. Silence: To LISTEN
2. Secrecy: To ASSESS
3. Solitude: To STRATEGIZE

4. Your strategic plan must be launched in PUBLIC:

17 Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me, and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good [work].

Nehemiah 2:17-18 (NAS)

7 steps to launching a strategic plan:

1. Clearly define the PROBLEM.
2. Identify with the PROBLEM.
3. Propose a “we” SOLUTION.
4. Give a clear, strong CHALLENGE.
5. Motivate at the deepest LEVEL.
6. Help others see God’s HAND in your vision.
7. Explain specifically how everyone can BE INVOLVED in the project.
Application/Questions:

1. What is the difference between “good intentions” and a specific “plan of action?” Why is this so important?

2. Do you have a strategic plan for your spiritual growth? Marriage? Children? Reaching your neighbors and friends? Ministry in your church?

3. What would God have you specifically do to move from “good intentions” to a strategic plan in one of the above areas? Who will help you develop this?
Introduction: Prerequisite #5 – A PERSONAL COMMITMENT

• The Awesome Power of Commitment:

  Definition: A pledge or promise to do something; dedication to a long-term course of action, relationship, project, or cause.

  o Commitment INSPIRES:

  o Commitment PROTECTS:

  o Commitment PROVIDES:

• Dynamics of Commitment: Our Dilemma

• Developing Commitment: Nehemiah’s Secret

  1. He MODELED it convincingly!

  2. He ASKED for it specifically!

  3. He CREATED an environment to sustain it!
Builders of the wall:
Nehemiah 3

1Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. 2The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them. *17 miles from Jerusalem – left summer harvest

3The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. 4Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. 5The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors. *6 miles *10 miles

6The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. 7Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah—Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth—places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. 8Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. 9Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. 10Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. 11Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. 12Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

13The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate. *26 miles south

14The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.

15The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King’s Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David. 16Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.
17 Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. 18 Next to him, the repairs were made by their countrymen under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah.

19 Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle. 20 Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

21 Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib’s house to the end of it.

22 The repairs next to him were made by the priests (from the surrounding region). 23 Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. 24 Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah’s house to the angle and the corner. 25 And Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. 26 Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.

27 Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. 28 Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. 29 Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. 30 Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner; 31 and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.
How to **Make** and **Sustain** “A Personal Commitment”

1. **The Principle of Cooperation**: “We will never get beyond how we’re getting along.” How?
   - Recognize people are **DIFFERENT**.
   - Recognize the immense value of **EVERY** person.
   - Recognize that our common **GOAL / VISION** is greater than our individual differences.
     - *Personal commitments are fostered when we feel like we belong!*

2. **The Principle of Coordination**: “The multiple efforts of a group are far greater than the sum of its parts.”
   - Recognize we **NEED** each other.
   - Recognize there is a **JOB** only you can do.
     - *Personal commitments grow when we know we are needed!*

3. **The Principle of Motivation**: “The value of the project to the worker will determine the value of the worker to the project.
   - Motivation must begin with the **LEADERS & INFLUENCERS**.
   - Motivation is sustained by **GODLY RESTED INTEREST**.
     1. The completed wall would mean **PROTECTION** from their enemies.
     2. The completed wall would mean **PROVISION** for a better life.
     3. The completed wall would mean **PRODUCTIVITY** and impact in their world.
     - *Personal commitments are sustained when “the” vision becomes “our” vision!*
Introduction:

“I had just made the deepest **personal commitment** of my life. I had followed my holy ambition… and I was **discouraged**, **depressed**, and **disillusioned**.”

- **A Common Pitfall**: **FALSE EXPECTATIONS**

- **A Timeless Axiom**: Our greatest personal commitments and spiritual victories are almost always followed by periods of intense opposition.

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**Prerequisite #6**: **A COURAGEOUS SOUL**
How to Handle External Opposition:

- **Round #1:** The enemy’s “first punch” to thwart God’s program in our lives is:
  - The “jab” of ridicule and criticism  
    - Nehemiah 4:1-3
  - Nehemiah’s response = Our example  
    - Nehemiah 4:4-6

- **Round #2:** The enemy’s “second punch” to thwart God’s program in our lives is:
  - The “upper cuts” of discouragement  
    - Nehemiah 4:7-12

  - Four causes of discouragement:  
    - Key Word:
      1. Loss of strength  
         - FATIGUE
      2. Loss of vision  
         - PERSPECTIVE
      3. Loss of confidence  
         - FAITH
      4. Loss of security  
         - FEAR
Nehemiah’s response teaches us how to “come off the ropes” and “rule the ring.”

Nehemiah 4:13-23

Four ways to overcome discouragement:

1. Be PROACTIVE!
2. Remember who’s on your TEAM!
3. Fight! FIGHT! FIGHT!
4. Never fight ALONE!

Summary: The Key = COURAGE!

- The COURAGE to FIGHT when external opposition seeks to DISCOURAGE us. Nehemiah 4
- The COURAGE to CONFRONT when internal conflict seeks to DIVIDE us. Nehemiah 5
- The COURAGE to ENDURE when personal attacks seek to DESTROY us. Nehemiah 6

Application:

Use this study guide as a bookmark in your Bible for the NEXT 10 WEEKS. Pull it out often and review it when you experience opposition.
Discussion Questions:

1. “God’s work is always carried out in a hostile environment.” How does remembering this phrase encourage you?

2. In what ways are you experiencing opposition with regard to living out God’s agenda in your life and relationships?

3. Which of Nehemiah’s examples of “handling conflict and opposition” were most helpful to you? Why?

4. What specific application do you need to make to deal with the opposition you are facing in your life?

5. What can you (and we) expect in the next few months as we step out with Holy Ambition?