

Topic	Laboring For a God Who Fights for Us
Reference	Nehemiah 3
Date	10 November 2019
Speaker	Arnold Lim

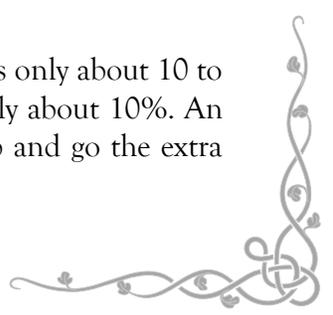
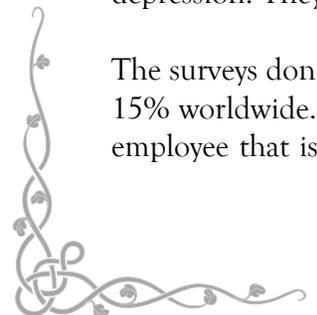
We are continuing with Nehemiah. Two weeks ago we were at work. Today, we are going to continue work. Last week we had George Verwer, which was on mission, so we're going to mash up the two together and we're going to look at work as missions today. Before we go to chapter four, could we have the other slide PowerPoint up? We're going to have a guest come up today. We are going to have Dr Lim come up. He runs what is known as the Incubator.

Let me just explain a little bit about what he does and then he's going to take over. He has been in longtime with Hewlett Packard and then he was headhunted for a company called Dust tech, Dust tech is a disc drive company, he had 1000 people underneath him. So he's basically a man who was very involved in multinationals and about sometime in 1995 he decided to go into coaching. And so he worked with Vistac, which is basically one of the largest coaching companies in the world, and they coach multinational CEOs. So for 20 years he has been coaching multinational CEOs, and sometime few years ago, God gave him a calling. He started a Bible school. So all of you business people today, this is for you. Seriously, today we are going to continue about work and business. Especially on entrepreneurs, and it's not the incubator. I'm going to give the floor over now to Dr Lim, and he's going to share a bit about what they do and even going to grill him with some hard questions. So over to you, Dr Lim.

Thank you, Arnold. Maybe just one or two, uh, correction on the, I almost couldn't recognize, but nevertheless, I was with Hewlett Packard but Vistage is actually the organization that actually coaches SMEs as well. I just want to take very quickly five minutes to introduce what Incubator is and also in the, in the, in the slides itself I will just share a little bit about my personal journey. How trying to integrate faith and work and the secular and this sacred divide. I'm sure many of you works in the workplace. How many you look forward to go to work every Monday? Well, very few, right? I'm sure more than five or six of you work still work but many of you, if I use the word vacation, how many you love to go on vacation? There you are.

You see work and vacation somehow personify something different in our minds. But I believe that because of what has happened to the workplace today, we are more or less really put off. So there are a lot of challenges that all of us face. And I think needless to say, the first thing that comes to mind is in the area of corruption. Do you agree? And I don't think I need to say any more in this country. There's just too much has been said. And the second issues that which challenges in the workplace is, is become unhealthy and very toxic. And many of us, a survey services that are on a Monday some people says there is a lot of depression. You know, every Monday you get up. You want to go to work, you have a depression. They say a lot of suicides happen on a Sunday night, and so I don't know.

The surveys done by this big company says that the people that are engaged in the work is only about 10 to 15% worldwide. In the U S the highest is about 30% and guess what? In Malaysia is only about 10%. An employee that is engaged in someone who really psychologically wants to do a good job and go the extra



mile, and it's only about 10%. And that has been on for many, many years. And why is that a case? Because the workplace is broken and redemption needs to happen not just at a soul level and also the workplace level. I think as Christians, we have a responsibility for redemption also at a workplace level.

And the third thing is there's an issue of a power struggle, survival of the fittest. Now as believers we always look forward that we also want to be winners, but they are losers also in the workplace and nobody likes the losers and because Christians are identified, believers are identified with the lost, the last and the least people who are marginalized. And we are also seen as people who are soft and it can be run over. So as a result, I think the workplace needs to be redeemed. So one of the challenges I face when I was running a company in a multinational, I was also at that time, an elder of a church. I started as a young people's leader in a brethren church. And subsequently I was trying to merge the two. How do the sacred and the secular divide ever come to meet. Sunday, I was, you know hallelujah and sudden Sundays I will be preaching and all that and Mondays to Fridays, I'll be back in the office. I'll be, you know, up there, because I'm MD of a big company and we would get calls and meetings in and out, so I couldn't make sense of the two.

I went out to see my elder and I talked to him. He's advised to me is, I think you should just mark your time in the workplace and then when the time is right, you just come out and serve God full time. You know? Uh, I saw ask him, is it possible for me to serve full time for God? Why I am now? Because I'm good in what I do. Can I not serve him? I think the teaching on that was so lacking. And there's, there's today I do not know churches, I'm sure it doesn't happen to you right now. People are beginning to understand a little bit more about integration of faith. But I still come across, when I wanted to start some of this work, like the Incubator or the Integration of faith and business, I went to churches and one of the young, uh, this men's group that I spoke to, when I talk about this, applying biblical principles in the workplace, a very prominent business person stood up. He's a prominent lawyer in the country. He stood up any point a finger at me say, this will never work in Malaysia. Do you know how corrupt it is? Do you know how difficult it is? Because he assumes that I don't know anything about business. I think so. I think there is real, but then I was thinking of back in a Christian Church.

And Christians, prominent Christian leaders are talking like that, but I think that day the Lord sent somebody to redeem me. The elder, very humble man sitting right in front, quietly stood up and turned to his Bible and say, didn't Joseph and Daniel live in a time of pagans? And weren't in the society as corrupt as we were today. But they stood for their faith, didn't they? So if they can do it, why can't we? So I taught that was my redemption. So if anytime you get challenges in the workplace, sometimes God sent angels that come and save you. So Nehemiah 4 you're talking about today is about challenges. We started Incubator wanting to transform the marketplace through multiplying biblical entrepreneurs. We believe if the Bible entrepreneurs and business owner can do their business according to the word of God we believe that transformation can take place.

Now, when I tell people that there are 2,500 verses in the Bible that speaks about business and finances, people are quite shocked because in comparison with the subject of prayer, there are only 500 verses that talks about prayer. Now it's not that prayer is not important and business is five times more important. No, I think there is a lot of equal emphasis in the Bible, so there is no sacred and secular divide in the

Bible. As far as God is concerned, we are one whole integrated. So I believe that if Christians learn how to do that the workplace can be redeemed and transformed.

So our solution was to come out with something. There are nine of us. We got together and we were inspired to say, let's put together something where we can help the next generation of believers, and nine of us were all in our sixties, the next lap is going to be very short, let's run the race well like Paul says, I fought a good fight. I finished the race, I kept the faith know. So all of us wanted that and the crown of righteousness. Many of us who are, you know, they say we are like toilet rolls that moves faster as you grow older.

It is not a Bible school per se but it teaches the Bible that relates to business and we have graduated about 33 students today and there is another 12 that are going through right now, the next intake is in June of next year. One of the great things about the Emir's business, it teaches them that your business don't belong to you. So at the end of the seven months, they will come before an audience among their parents, their pastors, the invite for the graduation, they'll dedicate their business to God. Now you have child delegation in the church, so we have business dedication. Your business has just been given birth, so why not dedicate to the Lord? So we do that with all the young entrepreneurs. We dedicate the business. Because you don't own the business. You're merely stewards of that business.

Then we have the CEO round table. When the business grow bigger, we want to journey with them. We want to walk with them. We want to coach them and help them. So we have a round table where there's a peer advisory. There is accountability. The Bible says that in a multitude of counselors there is safety without counsel the people fall. And Psalms 1 says that blessed is the men who do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. There are a lot of council out there which are ungodly, so if you want to seek godly counsel come and sit around peers who are believers, who are also in the, in the business itself.

Then we have cradle workplace. We try to put them in a place, you know, of any other startup business, you don't even have places start. So we provide space for them. So as students, they get seven months free of charge for the space that we have in our cradle. And we bring Christian investors to help the upscale, to give them opportunity and hopefully to help them along the journey as well. And lastly, we ought to build a political community. So every now and then we bring Christian speakers. And we, you want to let them network with one another and together they can do business together. And we have taken this overseas. Uh, to the less developed countries. For one of our things about our Incubator is that we are not just a set up as a commercial enterprise. We are in a way a social enterprise too. We have a mission, um, where we provide scholarships. So those of you who are really called to be business but don't have money to go in. You can enroll, apply to us, and you may get scholarship to join. Every year we give one or two at Emias business school and we also train up entrepreneurs in the third world nation.

So we have sent up actually four teams in the last one year in, uh, different places where we sponsor all the training for four days for new entrepreneurs as well as some NGOs and sometimes pastors. We have gone into places where they can go in, but they need a business. So we teach them about business and that's basically what the Incubator about and I.

Arnold Lim: We just want to wrap this up. Next year what we will do, we will start a series on marketplace. Where we will get Dr Lim to speak, we get Nehemiah, so there is something burning in my heart. And let me just ask a few questions very quickly and the most obvious question as since you're talking about startups. For the sake of the gospel, what has a more effective reach people in properness or people in salary position? What would the advise that you will give to young people today?

Dr Lim: Uh, I think, uh, I think each one of us can have an impact wherever we are placed. But there is such a thing called a calling. And in business you have to be called a, but there's a lot of myths about business and entrepreneurship. I think Christians have to clarify that in their mind because I think some of the myth, uh, is that business people are greedy. You know, that, they only thing about making money and as a result, Christians is we should not go after those things. The other myth is that, Christians who are in business, involve in very difficult corrupt activities and it's very challenging. Yes, it is challenging. And, uh, maybe the other one is that some people think that you can only be a businessman if you're born an entrepreneur. But the fact is that entrepreneurship can be taught. So today, universities are teaching entrepreneurship and all that. So I think we missed, need to clear our mind of some of these myths, and then we can make a better decision whether entrepreneurship is for us and because we have not been taught, so as a result, naturally you see when you graduate, find a job, you know? But I believe if it God has called you to be an entrepreneur, then I think you have a greater impact there. You can impact a lot of people. Yeah.

Arnold Lim: Okay. Because of time is short, we just pose one more question for Dr Lim and he will be here with a table outside there, please stay back and ask him questions. So here is a killer question. How can you differentiate between someone who is ambitious for self but he says he is doing it for God as oppose to someone who's really ambitious for God? One thing I really don't like something about Christian business people, they say I'm doing it for God, actually they are doing it for their own pocket. So how do you differentiate between the two?

Dr Lim: I believe that all of us are going through a journey, and the Bible says by the fruit you shall know them. There, there are people who claim this and that, but really the Bible wants us to be faithful and strong. So a lot of people in the marketplace as Christians, they, they get a wrong idea. They need to pursue success, which is, a wrong thing for a believer. A believer needs to pursue faithfulness. Yes, we need to pursue fruitfulness, but the right kind of fruit. And, uh, then we can see the fruit. People would judge whether you're doing it for yourself or doing it for your own self, uh, for, for the kingdom of God. So, the Bible commends us if we are faithful or fruitful in the right thing, but it doesn't commend about, pursuing, success. So success comes not out of pursuit, but success is a result, it is something that ends soon after us. You know, in Deuteronomy 28 it talks about if you obey all these things then prosperity and blessing will overtake you. So it is almost like you don't run after it, but is as a result of what you have been doing, success overtakes you. So you see someone in business it's not because he has been pursuing, a lot of times it's because he has paid the price of faithfulness and God has chosen the blessing.

Arnold Lim: Interesting. I think next year we might really get him back. Let us pray for Dr Lim.

SERMON STARTS:

We're going to continue with chapter 4 on what we had spoken two weeks ago. And, let just open quickly again in prayer. I think it really did get a pray for myself. Let me just quickly go through what we did. We did chapter 3 two weeks ago. We had three key points, work and kingdom mindsets, work and leadership, work and identity, and chapter 4 flows from chapter 3. And one thing we must understand about having a kingdom mindset is to understand work is essentially worship and we see that very clearly in Nehemiah. Nehemiah rose to the top. He never pursued success, he was a godly man who was faithful and he became a cupbearer and if he wasn't a cupbearer he would not have built the wall. So the vocation and the ministry essentially links one to one another. They are not, you cannot have this sacred and secular mindset. We look at leadership, we look at some of the goals today, we'll look at godly perseverance, but all leadership points to Christ, the servant King.

We are all caught to build his church to gather. Cool, gather no exceptions, and we are caught to unity in the body of Christ death. The big picture of chapter 3 and now we come to chapter 4 and chapter 4 suddenly things don't go so well. There is opposition. Now let me pull you back a little bit. The danger about reading a book like Nehemiah is that we tend to concentrate on the person, but a book of Nehemiah really isn't about Nehemiah, although he is a great leader. The book of Nehemiah is about the character of God. Now, one of the most interesting things about the book of Nehemiah is the silence of God. You notice that you read it you don't hear God speaking in thunder and lightning. You don't see miracles. It is not that the book is against miracles, but it's almost like God is at work where we think he's not there. So it's a fantastic book to study about God's character in his silence.

So let me give you three propositions here.

1. Opposition is inevitable.
2. Opposition and our decision making process.
3. Godly strategies from chapter 4 during opposition.

Now, opposition is inevitable if, I would like to propose two things coming generically from chapter 4 because what is happening in chapter 4 is before they were building the wall, it was all going very well and then some people didn't like it. Some people are basically saying, you Christians you do this and the moment you do this we don't like it. And then the opposition comes in waves in insults, in mockeries, in false accusations, it goes to chapter 5. So firstly, when you decide to do work in a godly way in an ungodly environment, and we all have stories, and the first thing is corruption. Let me just give you a small little example. I don't want it to be about me, but let me give you two. Like I say I'm an architect. You know, Chinese have a saying, it says you are as healthy as the horse you ride on. I'm not very big architect firm so a lot of my horses not very healthy one. That's the fact. People in the market tell you to do a lot of strange things, very un-biblical things and you know in the building line it is so corrupted.

Some of you may know this story. Years ago I was asked to go to Thailand for a study tour, anytime a client tells you to go to Bangkok for study trip, you've got to be very careful. So true enough I prayed, they brought an engineer, they bought a lawyer's, a whole big team, they went there and then suddenly they went to this place after food, I don't know here, and there is big building in the middle of nowhere and you know you are in trouble when outside there the sign says for men only and true enough you enter that there is all this glass. I don't know what they call it, a fish house or what. There's a strange word for it, when you know all the women are behind there, the men go in choose and they do a lot of things to to

degrade women. And the developer was pushing me, pushing me, go, go, go, this is what men do. And the lawyer before me, I said no I am going to sit here and I am going to take my beer. And strangely, the structure consultant next to me said, I'm going to join Arnold and take my beer and suddenly the three men huddled there, really very-very strange, in the lounge doing nothing. I tell you this, two things happen when I came back. Came back, there is no free lunch, they wanted us to sign documents to say, a building we're doing is not fit for habitation. I refuse to do it. Then I remember why they sent people to Bangkok.

Number two, on my plane back, the engineer said to me, My partner gave up the practice to become a missionary for the Methodist church. You see something? God opens the door for testimonies. So I don't want to make it about me, but there are stories. But you have to make a stand.

Last year I had another project where client rail money, I went to a meeting room one day. I saw a rifle there and this is not America. He was clearly trying to send me a sign. After that there was a lot of intimidation, I said I am not signing. We went almost to violence, but there are days where you make a stand and I'm going to tell you how the text tells you, how to make a stand. So that's lesson one.

Number two, you decide to undertake God-sized project. A lot of us are not in an ungodly environments. Some of us are semi-retired, some of you have got a lot of free time, a lot of free time so you go and work for the work. Church got a lot of things for you to do. And when you work for the church I guarantee you, you got opposition. It is because we are all sinners. Okay. In chapter four, the opposition is Sanballat and Tobiah and they were arming themselves with spears and knives. Now, our struggle is not against Sanballat and Tobiah and outside people. Our struggle is not flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, against the powers of the dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. We forget this when we go to work. Because we have divided it into secular and sacred. We come to church on Sunday and do our BS, VBS or all of whatever and hallelujah. In work, something else takes over and we forget the spiritual warfare happens the most at work and the context of this, our defense isn't a bow or the arrow or the sword or the armor. Our defense is the armor of God.

Now we fail to pick this up. In CS Lewis landmark book, the Screwtape Letters, it is really about series of letters from a senior demon to a junior demon. You know, he tells people, and it's very relevant to us in the workplace. There are two strategies that he tells, especially all your working people. Number one, the best strategy is make the person who is going to work don't believe that devil exists. Don't believe there's a demonic world. How many of you and you go to work, you actually believe you are engaged in a spiritual warfare, you don't, right? That's their first strategy.

Secondly, is to give you the kind of success where you say, everything is good, all my work is done and then you come to church and say hallelujah. They call this this gradual gentle slope. That means you don't learn to say no. The safest road to hell is the gradual one, the gentle slope, soft underfoot without certain turnings, without milestones, without signposts. You see any other sin a person struggles with he feels guilty. He's got an addiction, he feels guilty about it. He's got a bad temper, he feels guilty about it. He's successful in his business, he gets proud. He thinks he's a somebody. I had a very well-known Christian person in ministry. You know, I knew him personally because he was very successful in business or so, and they got caught in some issues, but he was very well known in the Christian circle. You know how he did

it? He got what they call a runner. We call it the middle man. He paid the middle man some money then in typical, I will give you money what you do with it I don't want to know. That's basically saying he can take the money and do whatever he needs to do with everybody. It doesn't come back to me. That's how Christians deals with it. That's pride.

Let me challenge you if you're in an environment where you struggle with corruption, let me challenge you and challenge myself. When was the last time you spoke to anyone about in church? When was the last time? We struggle with this, but we'd rather not talk about it. The safest road to hell is the gentle slope is the slope of vanity. Here's the other one. Some of you who feel, hey, I'm in a good job, American company, multinational, all the protocols in there, not toxic, then you are like a tent maker, but why Paul was a tent maker, it is a deliberate ambitious choice because as a tent maker he is basically mobile. We find in the book of 1-Corinthians, he therefore doesn't put a burden on the church. And because he's on a missionary journey, when he is a tentmaker he can therefore go and preach and teach. So what I'm trying to say is that career decisions have to have the gospel in your mindset, and once you do that, yes, Paul doesn't have oppositions doing tents. He has a lot of oppositions in his work.

There's one sister I met in the church who I deeply respected, she's not here today. She's an American. She made a decision to be a teacher in an international school so that she can travel the world and preach the gospel. I have deepest respect for her. You see your career choices will come with opposition if you do it with a kingdom mindset, either opposition in your work or when you are so involved in kingdom work is so big, there will be people who will be forcing against you. Let us just go back and say, well, okay, so easy to talk about opposition, how do we handle it? Whether in my workplace or in church, let's talk particularly about work, and let's talk about corruption, okay? Because that's the air we breathe.

We swim in corruption to get a license, I know it and I don't want to judge anyone this morning. Let's just say I am in a board room meeting and they deal with this thing, I don't know what to do. It's very difficult. I get it. Don't, don't ever see, I don't get it in my line we swim with sharks. So let, let's, let's pull back and look at the text. Now let's look at the kind of opposition.

4-1 When Sanballat heard we were rebuilding the wall, he became enraged and made fun of the Jews. 2 In front of his allies and the army from Samaria, he said, "What do these miserable Jews think they're doing? Can they rebuild it by themselves? Are they going to offer sacrifices? Can they finish it in a day? Will they get the stones out of the rubbish heaps, burned as these stones are, and give them new strength?" 3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was beside Sanballat, said, "Even a fox would make their stone wall collapse if it walked on top of what they're building!"

So first is mockery doesn't work. Let's go down to verse 7, when the mockery doesn't work verse 8 they all plotted together to come and fight again Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. In simple English, they cause office politics. They create trouble for you. That's the second line. After they create second line, then third trouble come. Now we have trouble from within the people in Judah, Judah the most powerful tribe says, the strength or laborers are giving out. There is so much rubble, we cannot rebuild. There own people now are trying to abandon the work, third opposition. So let's look at it.

1. We have mockery.
2. Plotting.
3. Your own people abandoning you.

Let's go on and then now we want to go into actual violence assassination. Verse 11 we will be right there and kill them, and the Jews who live near them came and told me 10 times over. Wow, 10 times over. That's a sign, is repeatedly whenever it turn, they will attack us. The work now is about to fail. After three chapters of success now the work is going to fail. And we find in chapter 6 afterwards down there, there is now false accusations. It reports among nations. Verse 11 and not only false acquisition, there are traitors in the midst, I realize God has not sent him, but he prophesies against me because Tobiah and Sanballat have hired him.

Let's, list it down. Who does that remind you of? Jesus Christ. Jesus was mocked upon, his followers, abandoned him, the Pharisees plotted to kill him, accused him, brought into a false trial, Judas betrayed him. Nehemiah points to Christ. So every time you feel you can't do it, here's the starting point. How much did it cost Jesus? If we value our salvation, we think of the cross and then we ask ourselves, how much are we prepared to sacrifice for the gospel? Jesus said this in Hebrews 12-2, looking upon Jesus in times the trials and tribulation, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy was set before him, and this is quite interesting, endured the cross despising the shame.

So if you walk into an office and you try to do what is right and people have a go at you, they threaten you, they mock you, think of Jesus who despised the shame and endured the cross and may that give us courage to move on.

Here's another reason, and I think George Verwer spoke about it last week. You think about if I'm a Jew and I am building a wall. I'm now, wow, God has brought us all together, we're one big family, is God's will I build the wall? Hallelujah. And come to chapter 4, bam, everything stops. You ask why God? Why? Why did God give us so much opposition? Why did God give us so much trouble? Didn't God wants us to build the wall. Yes, because he's trying not to build a wall so much, he is trying to build people.

Imagine the tribe of Judah, if they didn't go through chapter 4, now what happens in chapter 4, the tribe of Judah says, we can't build it, we can't build it, too much rubble. Nehemiah says, you can build it, you can build it. And we know at the end of chapter 4 they do it. So what happens? The trials at the work changes them, so here is the reason why opposition is crucial, why opposition is inevitable because God wills it. If your job is so smooth sailing you are of no value to God. God is looking for warriors. Then you see Arnold but we try and we didn't succeed. Well Verwer says this, you're better together even when we fall. That's really what chapter 3 is about, it is about going together. Opposition in our decision making process, whenever you have opposition your mind doesn't think straight.

I had one other consultant who was going through a lawsuit, and when you go through a lawsuit you cannot think straight. I have personal experience with this and I know. So his lawyer asked him, you know, you should go and take a document and back date it. The problem only with backdating it, you need an architect signature on it. So he took me out for food, talk to maybe his partner, Hey, you must help me, I got sued, this and that, and nobody knew. First in my mind is crazy. If I want to sign for you anyway, you know, and he was begging me. After that he sent me an entire Whatsapp message on it, which was completely stupid. You want to do that you must have the common sense, not to even put it in record, put it in record. He put it in record at all. So I noticed something when people are stressed at work they don't think straight and they make very foolish decisions.

I obviously never signed it. I tell him very nicely and I was just trying to tell him, firstly as a Christian I will not sign it. And here's some simple business sense. Never sign anything you don't understand, but you know, I'm just telling you people that don't think straight now this is, this is great you really got to learn this, that it's been picked up by everybody. From Tim Keller to everyone has picked this up.

In verse 8, the plotted together to come and fight with Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it, verse 9 is rich. We prayed. We get it right. God saved me. After they pray, what they do, they posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. You see? See, see what this versus is saying. Most of us when we pray God help me I cannot take it, then you wait, God give me a sign. No sign coming. Follow me. Either that we do like what my friend did, we just react. You know you've got problem, better quickly solve it. So there are two extremes, the one is found in James chapter 4 where it says, come now you who say today, tomorrow we shall go into such a town, spend a year there doing business and make a profit and then James scold them.

He says, all you're doing now is boasting. And he tells them you know what? He tells him basically to pray. We find it because it's connected to James chapter 1. Chapter 1 is about seeking wisdom. So here's one part of us. We react, you know, we are very reactive people. Business going bad, wow, need to get a loan. I need to downsize. I need to do this. We are now in a market business where you either, you either do niche and the problem with niche is how much niches can you get? How much blue ocean can you get? Or either that you got to scale up, some people say the day of the SMI is eclipsing. You scale up, you need a load and then your monthly expenses you sweat.

So a lot of people are now at that line where you either niche or you scale up, anything in between AI is going to take over already. So I've seen a lot of people react, you know, Oh, I got to do this for my business. I got to do this for my job. But where's God in the picture? Here is the opposite extreme. The other opposite extreme is you're looking for a sign from God.

One friend of mine recently quit his job. He quit his job, he couldn't stand the boss and he has been having this problem for a few years already and he is the sole bread winner. He quit the job without getting another job. Now what was very worrying for me was you went to a church and there was a prophet and this prophet told him, the Lord says to you, I will enlarge your territory. You just need to be steadfast and I have great plans for you.

Now, I'm not here to demean prophets, but when a person is not in his right state of mind, guess what a prophecy like that does. You're basically affirming his decision and you are not telling him you don't have a job. No, the prophecy tells me is within God's will. If someone tell you that, nothing more to say. Now what's great about this prayer is that are two things happening. They pray and then they act. You notice that. There is nothing in the text that says they prayed and they waited for a sign. They prayed then they use their common sense. You and I are designed to think and to make decisions. Here's one verse, which in my view has been completely misunderstood.

You see, most people read this verse as this, Be still. It is almost like a Buddhist way of reading it. Just sit down there and say, Om, Om, hallelujah, hallelujah, be still, haaa, very tired, God speak to me. God says, Arnold you should quit being an elder. Is that what the verse is saying? That's how people read the verse.

They read the verse as the meditation verse. Because the next it says, the heathen nations will know. The purpose of being still is so that the nations know I'm God. It isn't a meditation verse, it is the mediation verse. This is the end of Psalm 46, the psalmist is saying when the mountains shake and oceans raw, You are tempted to take things into your own hands. That's the context. The Hebrew word for still it Rapha, meaning let go, trust in me. Is that not right? When you go through difficult times in your work, who is God? Very often you are God, and Psalm 46 is telling you in times of trouble do not call on to Egypt. Do not call him to Babylon. Do not go on to Syria. Call onto me. Labor for me and I will fight for you.

You see, not all opposition is due to external evil forces. My friend who couldn't get on a boss, I want to tell him, have you ever considered is actually part of your personality problem? Because I know him, the way he say things to people, he really offend people. But because of our sinful nature, we like to make every opposition people's problem and not mine. Why? because sin is such that, I don't want to change, I want you to change. Now, what's great about this praise, they pray and then they act, so there's a tension between seeking God's will and our responsibility in decision making.

Nehemiah choose to excel in his work. He rose in the ranks of King Service. In God's timing, he was a position to choose to build a wall. He could choose not to. There's nothing in chapter one that says God spoke to him. None of that. He didn't go around asking for signs, you know, let me pray and look for vicious. None of it. The Israelites pray to God for deliverance from the enemy. Then they chose, they could have chosen to stop building the wall. They could have chosen to send a peace treaty to Sanballat and negotiate terms. They could have chosen to go by the King to ask for soldiers, but they chose a defensive strategy. Now, you're going to be very careful with this. Let me, let me put it to in business terms, they are building a wall at full speed you know. You know what they did? They cut their workforce by how, in business terms is thinking or your production went down by 50% you think there's a minor decision that's a shareholding decision.

They decide, all right, we're going to cut by 50%, the other 50% they're going to be our soldiers and then they make another drastic decision. The 50% that works. On one hand, you're going to hold a trowel, the other hand you are going to hold a sword, so technically your production went down by 75% you don't think there's a decision that was made lightly, that strategy decision? Did they do it by saying, God give me a sign. They thought it true. Now this is where I think is very relevant to us. Let me post you a few questions. Number one, if you quit your job. Where was God's will in it? Here's a question number two, quit serving your ministry. That one more easier. Simple example, you come to FBC, you serve in the ministry just like building a wall all doing very well. Then suddenly someone come up and tell you, you do things like that, so stupid one, nobody do it like that. So what do you do after that? You say, you go and do, I quit.

Have you asked yourself, was it God's will for you to do it? No, with all humility that's the most common answer we get with people, you know. We ask them, how come you stopped doing it? That person said this to me, I don't want to do anymore already, there is where this tension is. Quit working with certain people, I cannot work. There are certain people in the church let me be very honest, I'd rather not work with, but I tell myself I need to for my sake and your sake and for the sake of the gospel. So there are people who might, you know what, I don't want to invite them for meetings, I don't want to WhatsApp them and tell them, but for the sake of the ministry, for the sake of my pride, I will do it.

That's why this chapter is so great. It is not about people who don't get on working together, it is people who understand what God's will is. You see this, what God's will is. God's will is understanding obedience in scripture, that's the moral will. And then within that you have a right to make decisions. I think Paul put it best. You choose what is better, but what a lot of us wants is to find a divine answer. Have you asked that when you bought shares or not, do you ask that when you bought your property, Lord, should I buy a house at US\$5, show me a sign. You didn't, right. You saw it and you bought it.

But you come to work and say I cannot handle it, God give me a sign. It's very selective. It doesn't make sense. How do you make your decision making process? And let me, let me give you a simple guide there. What the text is saying, there are two ways of knowing whether your decision making is within God's will.

Number one, it's not about you because normally when we make the decisions is about us. I got hurt, so I quit. You never pay attention to me, so I quit. You never appreciate me, so I quit. I didn't get paid enough, so I quit. You're a lousy boss, so I quit. What's the common denominator? You follow me, but what did God wants you there as a witness, what if God wants you there in ministry so that ministry works. So the first obvious sign is, when it's about me. The second is when we go back again to chapter 3, when you don't have a kingdom mindset. You think Joseph would love to be in prison, but when was there he became a star prisoner. He organized the prison.

Some of us for seasons of life we are put in places where you will suffer. But remember the cross, the cross is Jesus despise the shame, but he endured it for us. So let me challenge you before you consider quitting. Now I'm not saying you should quit, but ask yourself is it God's will. Let me quickly end by looking at Godly strategies during opposition. And they are at least here four:

Number one, We all don't pray but got problem we pray very often. Correct. That's human nature. So of course I got opposition to my work, I pray. The issue isn't you praying, you know. The issue is how you pray. Get it. We all pray. It is not whether you pray, it is how you pray, look at their prayer.

⁴*Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity.* ⁵*Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.*

Wow, that sounds very strong. Let me just give a caution. He's not asking you hear me oh God, my CEO is really a bad person. Curse him Oh Lord, I put a curse on him. Turn him over to captivity, do not cover his guilt and make sure he goes to jail. That is not what the verse is saying. The Bible is not asking you to put a curse on him. This is a certain kind of prayer that is found in the Psalms. Essentially there are two things you pick it up. First is a prayer for justice. Number two you look carefully Nehemiah is framing the verse in such a way that he's saying, you're not insulting us. You're insulting God because it is God's covenant that Israelites comeback. The Israelites are in God's will to build a wall. So if you despise the building a wall, you are mocking God. Now where we are going with this, it is very simple. When you got a problem at work because your pay is bad, your boss is bad, your environment is bad, and you've got an obstacle to go through, our default mode is this, God remove the obstacle. Get me a better pay. Get me a better boss. Correct. What this pray tells us is those kinds of prayers are again centered on self.

A prayer like this is centered on God and a certain character of God, the God of justice. So next time you are saying I'm getting paid bad you know, I deserve higher. Lord, pray that you double my pay. The Lord is telling you that's a bad prayer, so the Lord is saying, am I being praying right in this economy? especially if my boss is not doing that well. Oh, I love that kind of prayer because I'm a boss at one company, but that's besides the point. The point is to center it not on yourself, you see I think Sam was very spot on. We need kingdom minded large prayers, not centered on our needs and what we want, but prayers that center about the name of God not being offended.

Number two, the work must go on. So we rebuilt the wall. What happens after the prayer? Nothing happens. God didn't remove any of it. They rebuilt the wall until it reached half of his height for people worked with all their hearts, and then trouble comes and then in verse 10 the people of Judah says, they can't do it. Now why I love this because you know the phrase one step forward, two steps back. That's Christian life. Have you ever had that? You feel you're making progress and you, you go back. I'm feeling I'm doing something going back and what the verse is trying to tell you, don't be, don't be discouraged. That's Christian life and we are to persevere. You ought to persevere fixing your eyes on the cross and he will finish the work for you that Jesus was victorious and the work must go on.

Now the problem is when work becomes very bad. What we don't realize is that it shapes your emotions. You learn to become bitter, you learn to become cynical and then there's a transference of that attitude to church and family because your work is so bad and you become cynical. You come to church, people do anything you say it is very stupid. You cannot change because you are so bitter. That's a transference. You know, you don't pick it up but other people pick it up. So what this second thing is teaching us is strategies is it, you must plough on, fix your eyes on cross and plough on. Now how do we do that?

Thirdly, you need a strategy, and I think this is fantastic strategy. Let me tell you what it does. There are three stages to it. The first, you find that in the verse,

¹³ *Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.*

So the first thing he does is he starts off small. He takes some of his investment and he puts it into basically this risk management. You could deploy some people to God after they're not enough. After that, he ups it, you know, from that day on, half a man did a work, half equip his peers. He went halfway. Wow. That's even more. He ups it now. I thought your productivity drops a half. And then lastly, he multitasks. We continue to where we have the people holding spears and the other half were working. So that's a psychological thing now. And working one hand, you got trowel one hand with a sword. Now have you noticed you could do a management plan in this? You could take out everything about Christianity here and teach a business plan with this.

Now, why am I telling you this? Because sometimes as Christians, we tend to think, the Bible teaches us about morality. You know, about being good, being this and that. The moment we say, you know, the Bible teaches us about good management practice, Oh, no, no, no, I cannot. It's not biblical. This is a classic text that tells you God is a management God and we should be people who learn to think

strategically. And here's I think what a lot of us don't do. We think reactively, we do not think strategically. I like to suggest disciples of Jesus Christ should all things strategically. We should learn to apply wisdom, learn to have a plan in everything we do and get people to help us out in this.

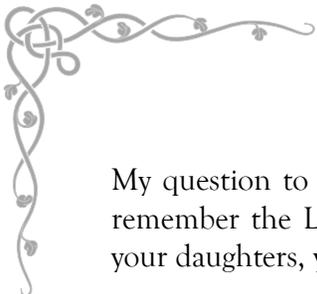
Here's the last one, and I'm going to end with this. God fights for us when we fight together, and I love this verse.

¹⁹Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. ²⁰Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!"

There are two things. One, the need to remember when you hear the trumpet, you remember, and then join us. That means they fight together. And we are now going back to chapter 3. So let me just close with this. What again is the single most repeated word in chapter 3. NEXT. So here is what I want to end with this and why we brought Dr Lim here today. If you're struggling with your work, you're not happy in your vocation, you think you're getting nowhere. Can I plead you, you not to just keep it to yourself. We ask people to come here today so that you can talk to them. You are struggling with corruption, struggling with anything today just one small step we want to ask you to do, talk about it. Why? Because we are next to you. It is my job to uphold you, is your job to uphold the next person.

That's how chapter 3 meets chapter 4 and I want to know enlarge this whole discussion beyond our vocation with a closing remark. We know that's the most repeated word, NEXT. So we stand with someone who's struggling in his job, and that person stands with someone else. But let me give you the larger picture of chapter 3 and 4. Who is the person we should stand next to the most, is the person who suffered like this. It one thing to stand in to someone who's struggling with work but it more critical than you and I stand with people who do this, and we just mentioned this is Christ or those who follow Christ. So let me just close by telling you, your work problems are nothing compared to the problems some other people face. And I was looking at this message, I was asking myself we don't need to go to Iran or Iraq or Pakistan, look at your country and look at those in this country who will mock upon, who have false accusations, and when they were not enough, plots to assassinate them. And then people betrayed them and I think of this person and I think of her.

No, I, I never knew Susanna. I don't claim to know her very well. She's very kind. Yesterday she sent me a message, see some praying for you, but got to know her better than I was. I was privileged enough to be with Pearly and some of us had a dinner last week. You know Susanna is not a speaker. She can't speak to anything. If Raymond was around, I look at her I will probably say, this one look like housewife, but God transform a housewife to a warrior, and I'm going to say this now in ending in all my own capacity, I'm not going to drag the church in. When people do God's work, this opposition and then they will mock you, they will accuse you, and when that is not enough you will disappear of the face of the earth. And why do they do that? They do that to intimidate the church. So when the housewife gets up and says, we are not taking this, you find back my husband or I'm going to make your life hell.

A decorative grey vine with leaves and small flowers, starting from the top left corner and extending horizontally across the top of the page.

My question to you, where does the church stand and Nehemiah tells us this, don't be afraid of them, remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your families, spiritual families, your sons, your daughters, your wives, your homes.