

If You Want to Know...Ask Him
Nehemiah 1:1-11
James 1:5-8
September 13, 2009

We are God's people, and the ministries you and I are involved in are very important for His Kingdom. However, every once in a while something significant comes along – something that challenges us and stretches us as citizens and workers in the Kingdom.

Now is one of those times for us at Sunrise church. We have a Building Committee that has been working diligently to try and determine the best course to proceed with respect to expanding our building. What should we build and how much can we afford? The process is moving ahead slowly and with some trepidation. While prudence and discernment are good attributes for church leaders to have, I feel that as the church's pastor I have not given the leadership that I should up to this point. As a member of that committee I have been guilty of wavering, not as a result of wisdom, but out of fear. As I have prayed about why that is the case in my own heart, God has revealed an answer.

The great preacher, Charles Spurgeon once said, "Whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets his people to pray." This is what has been missing. As we began this building process, I neglected what is assuredly the most important step. I did not lead our congregation in praying on a continual basis for what God would have us to do. Make no mistake; the Building Committee members have been praying, and that is good. But it's not enough. We all need to be joined as one as we undergird this project in prayer.

Let me share with you why.

I recently finished reading again the book of Nehemiah. As I encountered that story again, God placed Nehemiah before me as an example. You see, after a time of exile some of the Hebrew people had returned to Jerusalem to find the walls of the city torn down and the gates burned. Not only was this not a safe situation because of the threat of enemies, but it was not honoring to God.

Nehemiah knew something must be done, but before he did anything we see in the scripture that he "*for days, mourned, fasted and prayed to the God of heaven.*" Before he made any decisions, he humbled himself before God in fasting and prayer. He was even wise enough to know that he needed to confess his sin to God in order to make sure there were no barriers between him and the Lord.

As I read about Nehemiah I was reminded that James teaches us: "*If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – ask Him, and He will gladly tell you.*"

James also challenges us to expect God to answer when we pray. To do otherwise leads us to places where, as James puts it, we become as unsettled as a wave...not able to make up our minds...wavering back and forth in everything we do.

If we want to know what we should do, we should ask Him – and we should ask Him as a congregation.

As I mentioned before, this is a significant time for us at Sunrise. We need to decide how best to expand our building facility. Is the greatest need more classroom and meeting space? Is the greatest need a larger sanctuary? Or is it both?

Also, how will such a project be funded? These are major decisions, and they should not be made without the wisdom and leading of the Lord whose church this actually is.

We have already started down the path toward expansion. We are nearing the end of a 3-year capital campaign which has helped to pay off much of our present debt. That is an accomplishment worth celebrating. There is still more debt to pay, and I ask you today to contribute as much as you can toward that goal. Also, the Building Committee has chosen a reputable builder who will do a good job at whatever we end up constructing.

However, I want to remedy the oversight I made in my leadership of this project. Like Nehemiah, we know there is something great to be done here, so we need to follow his example and the teaching of James and enter into a time of prayer.

I ask each of you to pledge to pray for God's to reveal His vision to us. I ask you to pray that God would give us His wisdom. And I ask that you would pray that God would help us to put aside fear and to trust that He will provide financially for anything He leads us to do.

Pray in your homes. Pray in your Sunday School classes each week. Pray in your Bible studies. Pray in your committee meetings. Listen for the voice of God. As He speaks to you, please share what you hear with me, and I will do likewise.

It is true: "Whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets his people to pray." Together we will discern what the Lord wishes for us to do at Sunrise, and then we will boldly do it to His glory!