The Good Work - Part 4

# Done with The Help of Our God

## (Nehemiah 6:1-16)

I am so glad that you are here today, because we are in part four of our message series entitled “The Good Work”. This is the culmination of these past few weeks and we have been using the book of Nehemiah as the backdrop behind this series speaking to those of you who have this gut feeling that you were created for something more. You see, here’s what I know about you, you were not created by accident, but you were created with a purpose. The Bible says that by the providence of our God, he formed you, gave you gifts, passions, and desires to do something that makes a difference in this world.

I believe that the Spirit of God will speak to many of you, stirring you, moving you, and inspiring you to make a commitment to “The Good Work” that God has prepared for you as we talk about Church membership. Over the past few weeks, we have been talking about our purpose, values, and strategy here at Christ’s Community Church as we have looked at this incredible story of Nehemiah. For some of you, God has been moving you towards something, maybe you were about to accomplish it, when suddenly there is resistance. It could be that you have finally decided to commit to discipleship, or being a spiritual leader, or putting Christ at the center of your marriage and then there is this opposition. And what we discover is that the closer you get to doing what God wants done, the harder your spiritual enemy will fight against you.

Today, we’re going to go to Nehemiah chapter 6 if you want to follow along in your Bible and we’re going to discover one of the main strategies of your spiritual enemy to keep you from doing what God wants you to do. Here’s what the Bible says in verse one,

“When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it…” (Nehemiah 6:1).

And so, he was almost finished, but not quite. There wasn’t even a gap left in the wall, but Nehemiah says…

“Up to that time I still hadn’t set the doors in the gates” (Nehemiah 6:1).

Nehemiah is about to discover that the closer he gets to doing what God wants done the harder his enemy is going to fight to stop him.

For some of you, you’ve experience that, God moved you towards something, you were motivated, you were working, and then there was resistance. You were moving forward, making progress, doing what God wanted done, when suddenly there was this distraction. Nehemiah was working when suddenly the enemy tried to distract him, verse two says,

“Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono…” (Nehemiah 6:2).

And so, they see that Nehemiah is busy, and so they make an attempt to distract him from doing what God had called him to do.

In our world it could be someone asking you to coach a team or to be on a committee, and you know that you don’t really have the time. It could be that you get season tickets for whatever your sport is and something good distract you from something better. You say that you love God, but suddenly you’ve got something more important to do than to come to church and love him.

Nehemiah recognizes that they were trying to distract him and keep him from doing what God had called him to do. He says in verse two, that Sanballat and Geshem “were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you” (Nehemiah 6:2-3)?

In other words, he says, “I can’t stop because I’m doing something more important”. And sometimes you’ve just got to have the courage to say no to distractions; even if they’re good, because just because you could do something doesn’t mean that you should do something.

Nehemiah said, “Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer” (Nehemiah 6:4).

“No, I’m not going to stop, I’m not going to come down, I’m doing a good work.” And so, four different times Nehemiah gives them the same answer and each time the enemy tried to distract him he just became more determined to do the work and see it through.

This is an important principle for us to grasp as followers of Christ, because we were created for significance, God gave you and I gifts to make a difference in the church. And yet, here’s what happens, the moment you take a step of faith, you meet some resistance, and I want you to notice that Nehemiah didn’t get discouraged. He didn’t come down, he didn’t give up, but he said no to every diversion, every distraction, or temptation of the enemy because he knew he had a higher calling.

Now, all of you should have received a paper copy of the church membership agreement. For those of you watching online there is a link on our website at cccaog.org and if you click on “Connect” and “Membership” it’s going to take you to the membership agreement. That’s important and I want you to keep that in front of you so we can walk through it together, because this is an agreement that everyone who becomes a member of Christ’s Community Church agrees to. And we believe membership is important, not so much for voting and stuff like that, because we don’t do much of that, but more to say that I am attaching myself to this church body and committing to this church family. And so, in that respect, membership is of great value, and I want to spend a little time going over what it means to be a member of Christ’s Community Church and part of this Good Work God is doing in Emmitsburg.

I want to walk through this agreement together with you so that you understand what you are agreeing to, and I want you to know that this is everything, there are no secrets that come later. The membership agreement begins saying, “having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, giving clear evidence of being born again by living a consistent Christian life, and having been baptized by immersion following Jesus’ example, I desire to become a member of Christ’s Community Church. Therefore, being in agreement with Christ’s Community Church’s purpose, values, strategy, and structure under the Assemblies of God, and having maintained consistent attendance at the Church for at least three months, I now commit myself to God, to the leadership, and to the other members at Christ’s Community Church to do the following:

Number one, I agree to protect the unity of my church by acting in love toward other members, by refusing to gossip, and by following the leadership.

Now, this is one that sometimes people get hung up on, and so let me break it down for you. We agree to protect the unity of our church as the Bible tells us in first Peter, chapter 1, by showing sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters, loving each other deeply with all our heart (1 Peter 1:22, NLT). And so, we want to make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:19, NIV).

Sometimes, what that means is that we have to change habits and practices that are un-biblical because they create disunity and contention within the church. This is so important because the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 15 that we want to live in complete harmony with each other – each with the attitude of Christ toward the other” (Romans 15:5, TLB). And so, this isn’t about me giving you a list of what you have to change or what you’re not allowed to do, but instead as you spend more time in the Bible, growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is going to reveal things to you that need to change. There will be this process of divine revelation and conviction as the Holy Spirit reveals things to us in the Word of God and through the counsel of other believers. And so, if there are habits or practices in your life that cause disunity within the body, in an attitude of love and unity you are committing to change those things because the unity of the church is so important.

Now, we may not always agree on everything, but we agreed to protect the unity of our church by refusing to gossip because gossip harms the body of Christ. And the Bible says specifically not to let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs (Ephesians 4:29, NIV). And so, if you are a gossip and you would prefer to tear people down rather than build them up, if you have that habit or maybe another destructive habit and you are unwilling to change it then maybe you don’t need to become a member.

This agreement is a commitment to the process of sanctification, and as believers each one of us should have already made that commitment to God, but now we are making that commitment to each other in the church. And we make that commitment to the leadership because the Bible says,

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden…” (Hebrews 13:17, NIV).

Number one, we agree to protect the unity of our church by acting in love toward other members, by refusing to gossip, and by following the leadership.

And then, number two, I agree to share the responsibility of my church by praying for its growth, by inviting the unchurched to attend, and by warmly welcoming those who visit.

The apostle Paul says to the church in Thessalonica…

“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2, NIV).

And we agree to share the responsibility of our church by committing to spending daily time with God, connecting with God through worship and prayer, not just once or twice a week, but every day. It’s a commitment to personal regular growth as a member of the body, but also praying for and encouraging the growth of all the members.

We also agree to share the responsibility of our church by inviting the unchurched to attend. In Luke chapter 14, Jesus told a parable in which many people were invited to a great banquet, but all those who were invited had excuses which kept them from experiencing the best thing. In verse 23, Jesus told his servants,

“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23, NIV).

The message of this parable applies even more today, everything is now ready, nothing more needs to be done, and all are invited to come. Jesus said he wants to see his house full and so he said,

"Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you…" (Mark 5:19, NIV).

“Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (Luke 14:21, NIV).

“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23, NIV).

This is really the essence of what we do, our guiding core value: reaching, connecting, and equipping people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ; because every soul matters to God and he wants to see his house filled.

And so, we agree to invite the unchurched to attend, and then we warmly welcome those who visit. The Bible says it this way in Romans chapter 15,

“Warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified” (Romans 15:7, TLB).

And so, we practice hospitality, sharing with God’s people, warmly welcoming each other, encouraging one another, and loving one another for the glory of God.

We agree to share the responsibility of our church, and then number three, we agree to serve the ministry of our church by discovering our gifts and talents, being equipped to serve by the leadership, and by developing a servant’s heart.

This is a commitment to the mission of Christ’s Community Church, in other words, it’s agreeing to serve the ministry of the church. It’s a commitment not only to personal growth, but also contributing to the growth of Christ’s Community Church. This is so important because as followers of Jesus, the Bible says we are to continually be growing, becoming mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13, NIV).

Now, I’ll admit, I’m not there yet, but I’m working towards that. And so, my hope is that we can work towards that goal, continually learning and growing together. And I want to help you do that every week, and so every Sunday and every Wednesday we’re going to open the Bible, and we’re going to learn what it means and how to apply it to our lives. We’re going to search the pages of Scripture, seeking the Holy Spirit, discovering our gifts and talents, being equipped as the Bible says, to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Peter 4:10, ESV).

As we discover our gifts and talents, we agree to being equipped to serve by the leadership, because the Bible says that Jesus gave some to be … pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV). And so, this is a commitment to find somewhere to serve at Christ’s Community Church, whether it’s volunteering to help others, praying with others, encouraging others, teaching others, or whatever it may be; because every one of us, every member is engaged in ministry so that the body of Christ may be built up.

We don’t come to be served, but we come to serve, as the Bible says in Philippians chapter 2, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who… made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:5,7). And so, we don’t just come to church and sit and see what we can get, because we’re not consumers, we’re contributors, we are the body of Christ, we are the church, and the call of the Lord is to develop a servant’s heart.

And then, number four, we agree to support the testimony of our church by attending faithfully, by living a godly lifestyle, and by giving regularly, cheerfully, and generously.

And so, the commitment is to attend church regularly and faithfully, which means different things for different people. For some people it means every Easter and Christmas, for others like the first Christians, the Bible says, “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts” (Acts 2:46, NIV). Now, I am not saying that you’re agreeing to be in the church every time the doors are open, but membership is more than just stopping by every once in a while.

The Bible encourages us not to give up meeting together, but to encourage one another and all the more (Hebrews 10:25, NIV). And this is important, because I plan a spiritual growth journey for the church and so it is important that you stay connected with us, staying in that growth journey, so that together we will grow. This was the pattern of the early church, the Bible says, “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42, NIV). And so, we agree to support the testimony of our church by attending faithfully, and the second part is by living a godly lifestyle.

This is a commitment to represent Jesus with your life, with your words, with your actions, with your social media, and wherever you go. This is so important because as members of Christ’s Community Church we represent Jesus and so everything we do should bring glory to him and not cause people confusion. In other words, if I say I am a Christian and yet act or speak with words of hate, that causes confusion. That’s why the Bible says, “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” because not only are we representing Jesus, but we are presenting the gospel with our lives (Philippians 1:27, NIV). And so, wherever we go we are committed to sharing about Jesus both actively as well as passively.

And then, we also agree to support the testimony of our church by giving regularly, cheerfully, and generously. We believe in tithing and so one of the commitments we make to the Lord is to follow the biblical standard of giving at least 10 percent of our income to the ministry of the local church. The Bible says, it is the privilege of all believers to know and trust God with a tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, because it belongs to the Lord, and therefore it is holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30, NIV). And so, as we trust God with the first 10 percent of our income, he promises that he will protect and preserve the other 90 percent we keep. And so, the choice is do I want 100 percent without God’s blessing, or do I want 90 percent with God’s blessing, and so when you consider it that way as a believer, it is really an easy decision to make.

Now, often people will say, “Well, I’ve never tithed, I don’t even know how I could do it.” But listen to what God says in the Bible, it’s recorded in Malachi chapter 3, he says, “Test me in this” (Malachi 3:10). And so, this is an area where God invites you to try it and test him and just see if he doesn’t give you a greater peace in your finances. And then, in the second half of this verse from Malachi, God promises to throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you won’t have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10). And so, God promises that he will pour out a blessing as you test him and follow the principle of giving a tithe.

This is a commitment that we make together as the church and as the Bible says, “Every Lord's Day each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week and use it for this offering” (1 Corinthians 16:2, TLB). And so, we believe in the grace of giving, we believe in tithes and offerings, because the tithe is only a starting point. My personal feeling is that giving 10 percent is a little legalistic if you stop there; considering the fact that we are under the new covenant blessings and grace of Christ Jesus who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. In fact, Dana and I moved beyond the tithe long ago because we have seen and can testify to the Lord’s faithfulness. We believe his Word which says:

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, NIV).

And so, that is the membership agreement, and there may be some of you who would say, “Well, I am okay with the first three, but not so sure about the fourth.” And then maybe you’re not quite ready for church membership and that is okay; because we love having you as part of our church, part of our family, even if you’re not quite ready for this next step of membership. But for those of you that are ready to make this commitment, along with this agreement there is an application at the bottom of the page that you can fill out to request membership at Christ’s Community Church. Just fill out that information and leave it for me on the reception desk and for those of you online you can also do this on our website under the heading “Connect” and “Membership”.

Now, I know this is a big decision and so if you have more questions about our beliefs you can go to our website under the “About” heading you can see “Our Beliefs” there, and if you still have any more questions about a topic then you can email me from our website and I will gladly help walk you through that. I also want to mention that I’m always available and so if you have any questions, prayer requests, or special needs just email me because we are the family of God and we connect with each other in love.

When we come together in agreement, committing to one another as family, and attaching ourselves to this church body, God starts to use us. You’ll start making a difference in the lives of others, being a light in the community, a witness to the people you work with, a voice of love and hope to those who are without love and hope. And when that starts to happen, you won’t want to allow anything to distract you from that, and you’ll find it easier to say no to everything else. This is what Nehemiah discovered when he started repairing the wall. He realized this wasn’t just a good work, but this was God’s work, this was something that God had created him to do. And so, as he continued to build, he saw the faithfulness of God.

I don't know who this is going to speak to today, but maybe you want to do something that will outlast you, you want to do “The Good Work”. Maybe you feel a burden inside, you’ve got a vision for something, a heart that hurts for somebody, and you want to make a difference, because you know that God has called you to “The Good Work”. I believe there are some of you today, who know it, this is a calling from God, and you can’t shake it. You are ready to do what God has put on your heart to do, you know it is a good work, and you can’t come down. You know that if you stay in the game and do not become weary in doing good, at the proper time you will reap a harvest if you do not give up (Galatians 6:9). And so, I want to encourage you not to give up, to look past the distractions, and look to the God that has called you.

Nehemiah prays again in verse 14 and 15, he says,

“Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who have been trying to intimidate me” (Nehemiah 6:14).

Verse 15 says, “So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days” (Nehemiah 6:15).

And he got it done, because the same God that called him is the same God that equipped him. The God that stood with him and empowered him is the same God that brought him favor and victory.

Wherever you are in the process right now, I want to encourage you that God is with you, he will never leave you nor forsake you, and he is empowering you right now. Nehemiah tells us in verse 16,

“When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God” (Nehemiah 6:16).

Right now, he is strengthening you and encouraging you in his calling so that no man can discourage you, talk you out of it, or distract you. He’s calling you to make a difference in the world and when you surrender to him, to his power, to his provision, and the people he has placed around you, he will use you to change your world.

Let’s pray together.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

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