

Pray & Work

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2 ICA Empowered Conference here this Friday: a **Live Simulcast** led by Dr. Karyn Purvis. [how the brain functions because of *trauma, health issues or drug/alcohol exposure*]
1. This conference is ideal for **adoptive** and **foster** parents, social workers, agency professionals, church staff and ministry leaders, counselors, therapists and **anyone** who is involved with **children that have experienced trauma, abuse, or exposure to drugs/alcohol abuse.**
 2. This conference brings understanding to the **behaviors** and **challenges** that children face that have been through trauma and other life changing difficulties. [Teachers: also up to 11 CEU's *Continuing Education Units*] \$20
- B. Slide3 Title: **Pray & Work**
- C. Prayer: through our **tears**...may we see **rainbows**.

II. Intro:

- A. Slide4 Once **Linus** (*from the peanuts cartoon*) said to his sister **Lucy** after she had done something mean to him *again, Big sisters are the crab grass in the lawn of life.*
1. Know anyone like that?
- B. Expect criticism & be ready for it.
1. **The enemies of God** will do everything in their power to come against **God & His work, and never** sit idly by w/o a relentless fight...**Expect it!**
- C. In scripture & so in our life...after a series of **success** often comes a **severe crisis**. [The enemy doesn't like things going well for *his enemy's kingdom*]
1. So far Nehemiah has had: his prayers answered, received royal permission to return to Jerusalem, was granted governmental resources, authority, protection, & an enthusiastic response from his fellow countrymen...
Slide5 but it so happened (**see** vs.1).
 - a) All through history men/women **of God** who ventured upon the service **for God** has been confronted with *the very same problems* that constantly vex **us**. Alan Redpath
 2. **Read** Spurgeon (Swindoll pg.62)
- D. Pick out the **different weapons** the enemy uses here.
1. As Paul said, **for we are not ignorant of his devices.** 2 Cor.2:11

III. Slide6 **RIDICULE (1-6)**

- A. (1) What is mockery's goal?...for you to *stop, give up, just quit*.
1. How do you battle that? Remind yourself **who's** work you're doing.[God's, not yours]
- B. Practically, why the attacks?
1. A fortified Jerusalem would endanger the balance of power in the region.
- C. (2,3) How Satan loves his *rumor & ridicule campaign*.
- D. Slide7a Thomas Carlyle, the British critic & author said, *ridicule was the language of the devil*.
1. Shakespeare called it, *paper bullets of the brain*.
- E. Slide7b Who do you remember in scripture suffered at the hands of ridicule?
1. Goliath did this to David, So the Philistine said to David, Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?
 2. The Philistines did to Samson, They said, call for Samson, that he may perform for us.
 3. Jesus suffered at the hands of ridicule from *thieves, the people, & soldiers*.
- F. Slide8a Sanballat ridicules...
1. (2a) He ridicules the workers - What are these feeble Jews doing? (but when we are weak He is strong)
 2. (2b) He ridicules the work itself - Will they fortify themselves? (Feeble Jews can't build strong walls) Will they offer sacrifices? (Sanballat was blaspheming against Jehovah God...God won't help His people) Will they complete it in a day? (means, this is a difficult job, they'll soon quit)
 3. (2c) He ridicules the materials - Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish; stones that are burned? Yes, just watch.
 4. (3) He ridicules the finished product - Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall?
 - a) You won't need an army to knock this down one little fox could.
- G. Slide8b (4,5) He prayed & asked God to *fight the battle for him*.
- H. Imprecatory prayer (curse) – he was praying as *a servant of God*, not requesting personal vengeance but official vindication for God's people.
1. To oppose God's people was to oppose God.
- I. (6) Note: Pray & get back to work.

IV. Slide9 CONSPIRACY (7-9)

- A. Slide10 (7,8a) The threat was that they'd attack from every side:

1. **North** (Sanballat/Samaria) **South** (Arabs) **East** (Tobiah & Ammonites) **West** (Ashdod)
- B. Why is it always easier for **enemies** to come together for a single purpose **than** it is for Christians to? Then the **Pharisees** went out and immediately plotted with the **Herodians** against Him, how they might destroy Him. Mk.12:13
- C. (8b) **Confusion** often causes anxiety to our souls. We start to spiritually hyper ventilate.
- D. **Slide11** (9) What did Nehemiah do to meet this threat? Make your **prayer** & set your **watch**.
 1. Pray & keep working (pray & sweat)
 2. Here is the clear balance between faith in God & readiness.
 3. There is **neither** foolish independence of God **nor** foolish neglect of human responsibility.¹
 4. The NT inverts it, **Watch & Pray**.
 - a) Means **trust God**, **while** at the same time **be alert** to what the enemy is doing.

V. **Slide12 DISCOURAGEMENT (10)**

- A. The Devil was having a **yard sale**, and all of his **tools** were marked with different prices. There was *hatred, jealousy, deceit, lying, pride* - all at expensive prices. **But** over to the side of the yard on display was **a tool** more obviously **worn** than any of the other tools. It was also the **most costly**. The tool was labeled, **DISCOURAGEMENT**. When questioned, the Devil said, *"It's more useful to me than any other tool. When I can't bring down my victims with any of the rest of these tools, I use **discouragement**, because so few people realize that **it belongs to me.**"*
- B. They Lost their **Strength** (10a)
- C. They Lost their **Vision** (10b)
- D. They Lost their **Confidence** (10c)
 1. Leith Anderson said, *Most things that **discourage** me are dwarfed by some new problem within 72 hours.*
 2. Have you become **discouraged** about the amount of rubble/rubbish/trash that must be cleared away in your life?

VI. **Slide13 INTIMIDATION (11-23)**

- A. (11) When the enemy can't **fool** you he will try *frightening* you.

¹ G. Cambell Morgan

1. The Jews living outside the city would come to work w/**frightening tales** about the enemies plans.
- B. (12) **Scare Tactic**. Plots of war.
1. *Some fears, are no fears at all.* [most worrying is about things that *never comes to pass*]
- C. (13) While **Critics discourage**, **Leaders encourage**.
1. **Satan** wanted to use these problems as **weapons** to **destroy the work**, **but God** used them as **tools** to **build His people**.
 2. **God had one Son w/o sin**, **but He never had a Son w/o trial**.²
- D. (13-16) Fuse together w/a common goal.
1. When **fear** strikes, immediately *a good leader reassures his fearful workers*.
 2. Frightened people **discourage** others & help **bring defeat**...**What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.** Deut.20:8
- E. Note he arms & assembles **whole families**. *Like Israel today*...
1. **Slide14a Yom Kippur War Oct 1973**. A coalition of Arab states led by **Egypt & Syria** against Israel as a way of recapturing part of the territories which they lost to the Israelis back in the **6-Day War**. The war began with a **surprise joint attack** by Egypt and Syria on the Jewish holiday of **Yom Kippur**. **Just 1 problem, 1 phone call** to a house reached the whole family of soldiers, both enlisted & retired, because they all celebrate Sabbaths & holidays together.
- F. **Slide14b (14) Direct your attention toward the Lord**. *Remember the Lord, great & awesome*.
1. The **Greatness of God** helps us overcome...our **fear of man**.
 2. **Fear & faith cannot live together in the same heart**.
- G. (15-18) **Build & Battle** - Our hands must be familiar w/the **sword** against the attack of our spiritual enemies, & w/the **trowel** to contribute our bit of work toward God's building.³
- H. **Sword**
1. *What instrument, tool, or weapon are your hands very comfortable with?*
[Guitar, needle & thread, gun, hammer, nun-chucks]
 2. *How did we get comfortable w/these?* (using them often)
 3. *How are you with wielding the Word of God?* (it works the same, get comfortable w/it)
- I. **Trowel**

² Warren Wiersbe

³ F. B. Meyer

1. What is your part of the wall to build for His kingdom?
- J. Slide15 Spurgeon started a famous magazine back in 1865 called *The Sword & the Trowel* – the title he grabbed from here.
1. He said it was a record of **combat with sin & labor for the Lord**. *We would ply the trowel w/untiring hand for the building up of Jerusalem's dilapidated walls, & wield the sword w/vigor & valor against the enemies of the truth.*
- K. Slide16 The people practiced Eph.6:10a,18. *They armed themselves, prayed, & kept working*
1. Put on the **whole armor of God...Praying** always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; Being **watchful** to this end with all perseverance.
- L. (19,20) Determine a rallying point -
1. Where did Nehemiah plan to be if a fight broke out? rally to **us** there.
Learn much of a leader here.
 - a) *He was a leader who served & a servant who led.*⁴
- M.(21-23) Look out for one another - See vs.14b also.
- N. Slide17 (22) Guard by day, work party by night.
1. So they **intensified, instead of abandoning** the work.
 - a) They were able to complete it in 52 days.
 - b) You can't always work like this (at this level of intensity) **but** there are times when you have to put in the *extra effort*.
- O. What a great picture Nehemiah gives us: Having our **sword** girded at our side, a **tool** in our hand. Having a **mind** to work, eyes **watching**, & our ear **listening** for the trumpet of any emergency (or like *Jesus' Return*) & a **heart** to work together with others.
- P. Slide18 Or as Redpath explained why the Jews were successful: The people had...
1. A **mind** to work (6)
 2. A **heart** to pray (9)
 3. An **eye** to watch (9)
 4. An **ear** to hear (20)

⁴ Warren Wiersbe