

Starting is a lot easier than finishing.

The initial momentum is not enough to get us through to the finish.

On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. ² Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors. Nehemiah 9:1-2

“In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.” Nehemiah 9:38

“We are not going back!”

- **Relationally** - “We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons.” Nehemiah 10:30
- **Financially** - “When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day. Every seventh year we will forgo working the land and will cancel all debts.” Nehemiah 10:31
- **Ecclesiastically** - “We assume the responsibility for carrying out the commands to give a third of a shekel each year for the service of the house of our God... and for all the duties of the house of our God. ... We will not neglect the house of our God.” Neh 10:32-33, 39

When the emotion went down, they would need standards in place to ensure they finished well and remained ‘bless-able.’

“Why is the house of God neglected?” Nehemiah 13:11

Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. ²¹ But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you.” From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath. Nehemiah 13:20-21

Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. ²⁴ Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. ²⁵ I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. Nehemiah 13:23-25a

- 1) No matter what God has done for you, you have the potential to drift right back into the same mess that God has saved you from.
- 2) Finishing well requires clear standards and bold leadership.
 - How far? How much? When? Who?
 - This is what I will do. This is what I will not do.

Let's Connect

- What project have you've started that you have yet to finish?

Let's Talk About It

It's a lot easier to start than it is to finish. Why? Because the initial momentum that gets us started is not enough to get us through to the finish. Generally, the thing that gives us that initial momentum is an encounter with God. While building the wall, the people of Israel had an encounter with God and were motivated to renew their covenant with Him. They promised, “We are not going back!” Nehemiah was shocked and enraged that within a short period of time, they had drifted back into the same patterns of their ancestors. How? They treated carelessly the Law of God in the areas of relationships, finances and their worship. No matter what kind of encounter you've had with God, we all have the potential to drift into the same mess He has saved us from. But with clear standards and bold leadership, you can finish well.

Nehemiah 9:1-2, 38; 10:30-33, 39; 13:11, 20-25, 30-31; Matthew 4:18-20; Philippians 1:6

- Which part of the message made an impact, caught your attention or challenged you?
- Read Nehemiah 9:1-2, 38. Why is it so much easier to start something than it is to finish it? How have you experienced an encounter with God that motivated you to start something, but for some reason you just lost momentum?
- Read Nehemiah 10:30-33, 39. Nehemiah led the people to renew their covenant with God by making three promises – promises regarding their relationships, finances and the way they worship. What standards do you have in place to keep you from drifting away from what God desires for you in these areas?
- Read Nehemiah 13:11, 20-25, 30-31. Is there something God is asking you to do that you've yet to obey him? If so, what is it and why are you hesitant?
- Pastor Gregg said that obeying God keeps us 'blessable'. Where do you need stronger standards in your life, so you can remain 'blessable'? How might having clear standards and bold leadership keep you from drifting from what God has called you to do? What would bold leadership look like in your life? How can this group support you?

Take a Step

- Take some time to prayerfully develop some clear personal standards in the areas of relationships, finances and in being a part of the church. Then trust God for the bold leadership you need to stay the course and finish well.
- SOAP reading: **Day 1:** Proverbs 5, John 12; **Day 2:** Proverbs 6, John 13; **Day 3:** Proverbs 7, John 14; **Day 4:** Proverbs 8, John 15; **Day 5:** Proverbs 9, John 16; **Day 6:** Proverbs 10, John 17; **Day 7:** Proverbs 11, John 18

Here's My Prayer

- Lord, please give me a vision. And as I pursue that vision, I want to set up clear standards as I follow you. Please fill me with your Spirit so I can lead boldly and stand strong as I move toward the vision you've given me. Lord Jesus, I pray you'd be glorified through it all!
- Heavenly Father, thank you for miraculously bringing us to *The Willows* property. Please increase our faith and courage as we focus on You and move forward together in the process of taking possession of *The Willows*.