

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Why You Need a Team

Monday, January 30, 2017

Have you ever been involved in a group project in school? Group projects can be some of the most frustrating experiences on planet earth (unless you get a hard-working, cooperative group of people who love the class, which is rare, but possible). You'll typically have these characters in the group:

- The *I'm busier than everyone else on the face of the earth, so I can only contribute so much* person.
- The *I'm the boss, and I need to tell everyone what to do in this project because it'll make things go easier* person.
- The *I'm going to complain about everything and hold back the group* person.
- The *I'll do anything* person. (We always love that person).
- The *I'll do anything (but actually won't do anything)* person.

This is just a short list of the people with whom you might work in a group project. Not all are bad – I'm talking to **you**; the *I'll do anything* person – but some can be downright impossible to work with. While it might be fun and easy to lament the dangers of group projects, it is even more fun when you're on a team that does work well together.

Whether it's group projects, team sports, family vacations, or the [marshmallow challenge](#), it's clear that radical collaboration is essential if the group is to be successful.

If this is the case in the above examples, why should it be any different in designing a well-lived, joy-filled life?

It isn't.

In fact, according to Bill Burnett and Dave Evans, authors of *Designing Your Life*, you must have a team of collaborators in order to build this life; you **cannot do it alone**. They write,

“If you find yourself standing alone in front of the mirror trying to solve or figure out your life, waiting to make a move until you are clear about the correct answers, you're going to be waiting a long time. Look away from the mirror and look at the people around you.” *Designing Your Life*, p. 201.

This past weekend, we looked at Nehemiah chapter 4 and how Nehemiah used a *team* of people – his braintrust, board of advisors, or team of collaborators – to accomplish his mission. How do we get a team of people that can help us in designing our life? First, we need to know that, as Ben defined it, *radical collaboration* is building an **intentional team** to help you engage in the **design** process. This team of people around you cannot be simply composed of your friends or people you stumble upon. They need to be people you specifically select -- whom you can trust to be your candid counsel.

This can be intimidating, though. How do you build an intentional team? Ben gave us a few steps:

### **Identify (2-6) people who help you think, rather than tell you what to think.**

This is important. The people who are going to help you in your design process must be interested in helping you design *your* life, not simply duplicate *their* life. They should have a good understanding of your LifeView and be able to help you discern whether your choices align with it.

How did Nehemiah do this?

#### ***Nehemiah 4:16-20***

***<sup>16</sup>But from then on, only half my men worked while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. The leaders stationed themselves behind the people of Judah <sup>17</sup>who were building the wall. The laborers carried on their work with one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon. <sup>18</sup>All the builders had a sword belted to their side. The trumpeter stayed with me to sound the alarm. <sup>19</sup>Then I explained to the nobles and officials and all the people, “The work is very spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. <sup>20</sup>When you hear the blast of the trumpet, rush to wherever it is sounding. Then our God will fight for us!”***

Nehemiah selected specific people for specific roles. While we are going to discuss these roles in depth later this week, it will be helpful to have a brief overview today.

The **leaders** were people uniquely positioned behind the people of Judah ready to take and give direction. On your team, you'll need someone like this,

someone who is uniquely positioned to provide practical problem-solving techniques and direction in a specific area of your life.

The **laborers** were people that were willing to do whatever it took to get the wall done. On your team, you'll need people who will do whatever it takes to help you succeed.

The **builders** were those who had a skill they could offer. If you have a specific direction in which you'd like to move, you'll need people who can bring a specific skill-set to the table, such as resume-building to help with getting a job.

Finally, the **trumpeter** was in charge of sounding the alarm. You'll need someone who has permission to "sound the alarm" in your life when things are off track.

Nehemiah's task was daunting. He was attempting to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem amidst violent opposition. He knew he needed a team strategically placed to help him succeed. You're most likely not in the same situation (although it may feel like it at times). However, you will also need that same radical collaboration in your life if you want to move forward.

Do you have some of these people in your life already? If so, how have they helped you? Do they know they play that role in your life? Thank them and encourage them.

If not, do you have people in your life that you think would fit one of these roles? Who?

**Prayer:**

*Father, I know I can't do this alone. I know that you created me for relationship with you and with other people. I want to live out your purpose for me, and I know that I'll need others alongside of me to help me with this. Amen.*

*This post was written by Andy Rectenwald, the Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study*

# Who Should Be on Your Team?

Tuesday, January 31, 2017

The book, *Designing Your Life*, teaches us that one of the steps to finding our direction in life is establishing a “LifeView.” The authors define this as your ideas about the world and how it works. Why are we here? What is the meaning of life? What is good, and what is evil? What is the role of joy, sorrow, justice, injustice, love, peace, and strife in life? These are just a few questions that can help you get started. Your LifeView points to what matters most to you.

Once you’ve thought about your LifeView, it’s important to think about the people in your life who can offer counsel. These people should be able and ready to help you understand your LifeView and to keep you on track. Ben talked about Nehemiah and his task of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah understood that to do this job well, he would need people around him fulfilling specific roles. He had leaders who positioned themselves behind the people building the wall, giving them direction. He had laborers who were willing to work hard and do what was needed. He had builders who possessed more specific skills to help accomplish the task. He also had trumpeters who were ready and waiting to sound the alarm if trouble was on the horizon.

When you are working toward building your team, look for people to fill those types of roles: a leader to help give you direction, a laborer who is willing to work toward helping you be successful, a builder with a skill-set who can help you with a specific need, and a trumpeter you trust to “sound the alarm” if they see your life straying from your LifeView.

The verse below from Proverbs speaks to the importance of advisors. A middle-aged King Solomon wrote this when he was ruling as the third king of Israel. He likely was thinking of his need for counsel in dealing with issues as king and ruling over a nation, but it also applies to each of our lives and situations. King Solomon, though revered as the wisest man on earth, should have listened to his own advice later in life. He began to allow his LifeView to be swayed from that of loving the Lord to one that involved worshipping false idols. The trouble came when he sought counsel from, and was influenced by, his foreign, idol-worshipping wives. In King Solomon, we learn what to do through his words in the Bible, and what not to do by his actions, specifically later in life.

**Proverbs 15:22**

***Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisors bring success.***

Have you ever found yourself in similar shoes to King Solomon, in that you're surrounded by people who influence you in a way that is not good for you? Have you been able to overcome this by changing your counsel? Why or why not?

Who is on your team? If the spots are not filled, where might you seek those fit for the job?

**Prayer:**

*God, please surround me with people who will influence me to be the person you want me to be. Help me to seek their guidance when needed and to keep a steady relationship with them that will honor you. Give me the discernment to identify those who are a negative influence in my life and the wisdom to gracefully walk away from those situations. Amen.*

# Apollo 13 and Teamwork

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

On April 13, 1970, more than 200,000 miles from Earth, a service module oxygen tank on the Apollo 13 spacecraft exploded, prompting astronaut Jack Swigert to utter the famous (and oft-misquoted) remark, "Houston, we've had a problem here."

The explosion robbed the spacecraft of its normal supply of electricity, light, and water, signaling immediate danger and grave concern for the astronauts on board. As most of us know, it also served as the catalyst for one of the great examples of teamwork in the modern age.

Led by Apollo 13 flight director (and Toledo native) Gene Kranz, a team of NASA engineers and the Apollo 13 crew worked together – against time and a myriad of obstacles – to return the astronauts safely to earth. Among the team's accomplishments was devising and testing a method of removing deadly carbon dioxide that accumulated in the lunar module after the explosion. To do this, they had to work in tandem across 205,000 miles, using only materials found on board the spacecraft – including plastic bags, cardboard, and tape – to construct a makeshift exhaust system. Flight controllers also developed procedures for powering up the command module after its unplanned sleep, writing the necessary plans in just three days, instead of the typical three months.

Although the crew did not succeed in its goal of accomplishing a lunar landing, the collaboration of the Apollo 13 team averted near-certain disaster, prompting NASA to classify the mission as a "successful failure." Virtually all accounts of the mission acknowledge that this inspiring outcome would not have been possible without the diverse perspectives, ingenuity, and resourcefulness contributed by all involved.

As Ben shared this week, the principle – and value – of teamwork applies to our personal lives as well. Assembling a team is a vital component of designing a well-lived, joy-filled life.

In the Monday edition of *LivingItOut*, we examined the benefits Nehemiah derived from the team he assembled. Leaders (those directing the project), laborers (those doing the physical work), builders (those with a particular set of skills to share), and trumpeters (those equipped to sound the alarm in times of danger) each played an essential role in the safe and successful reconstruction of the Jerusalem wall. To be certain, Nehemiah's success was

fueled by his unrelenting faith in God. But many hearts, minds, and hands – all working in unison – were required to complete the construction of the walls (Nehemiah 6:15).

Methodist minister and Yale professor Halford E. Luccock once said, “No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it.” The same is true with the pursuit of a joy-filled life. We can try to “go it alone,” but we’re always better off when we dispense with the notion of invulnerability and seek the fellowship and counsel of others we trust. Last weekend, Ben encouraged us to take steps toward building our own team – our personal board of directors, if you will – to provide helpful counsel in our life design. Have you taken any steps to assemble your team?

In recalling Apollo 13, mission commander James Lovell said many years later, “I sometimes catch myself looking up at the moon, remembering the changes of fortune in our long voyage, thinking of the thousands of people who worked to bring the three of us home.” Fortunately, we need not reach across the stars or the years to realize the benefits of a team in designing our lives. If you haven’t yet done so, consider reaching out to the people you trust to provide counsel in your life.

#### ***Nehemiah 4:16-18***

***<sup>16</sup>But from then on, only half my men worked while the other half stood guard with spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. The leaders stationed themselves behind the people of Judah <sup>17</sup>who were building the wall. The laborers carried on their work with one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon. <sup>18</sup>All the builders had a sword belted to their side. The trumpeter stayed with me to sound the alarm.***

Imagine for a moment how Nehemiah’s mission would have been affected by the absence of even one segment of the team referenced in the above passage. Turning to your life design, can you identify gaps in your team that may be preventing success?

What can you do this week to begin closing any gaps by engaging trusted advisers?



**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, we are ever-grateful for the presence of your loving hand in our lives. We also thank you for the gift of one another, the fellow creatures of your kingdom. Help us to exhibit the wisdom - and derive the mutual benefits - of working together as we seek to design our lives and serve you. Amen.*

# Your Team Can't Do It All For You

Thursday, February 2, 2017

We are now well into the New Year. How many of us set goals and made resolutions after the stroke of midnight on January 1? Setting goals is easy. Seeing our goals through to completion is where the tough work comes in. Nehemiah, the focal point of today's passage of Scripture, gives us an excellent example of how to make progress toward our goals. He employs the tools of concentrated effort and commitment to get things done with his team.

The *Life Application Study Bible* describes Nehemiah as, "a man of character, persistence, and prayer." Nehemiah's word was as good as gold. He set out to rebuild a wall around Jerusalem, and he would allow nothing to get in his way. He demonstrated extreme focus by continually progressing toward his goal no matter what.

The Bible says that he and his workers didn't even take off their clothes until the wall was done. 18th century theologian Matthew Henry says this means they were so committed to their goal that they didn't even take time to dress or undress, going so far as to sleep in their clothes so they would always be ready to work. Now that is focus! As the leader of the operation, he could have let his team carry out the work of rebuilding the wall; instead, he got down into the thick of it and did his part.

Finally, Nehemiah is said to have been a man of prayer. He did not set out on his own to accomplish his goals. He kept in contact with God throughout his endeavor, seeking wisdom and strength, and he built a team that he worked with to progress in his mission. Today's Scripture passage indeed has spiritual implications for us as Christ-followers. We need to be fully committed to our journey with Christ and always ready for an attack, but we can't do this on our own. Like Nehemiah, we should never remove our "clothes" of the truth of God's word and our continual connection to him through prayer and connection to others on our team. Never let down your guard, be always ready to defend what you believe in and the way you live, lest you be swayed by persuasive arguments that run counter to your way of life and godly pursuits. How is your character, persistence, and prayer life?

## ***Nehemiah 4:23***

***During this time, none of us - not I, nor my relatives, nor my servants, nor the guards who were with me - ever took off our clothes. We carried our weapons with us at all times, even when we went for water.***

Was Nehemiah alone in this pursuit? Why is it important that everyone was on the same page when it came to not changing their clothes?

What is the significance of having weapons with them at all times in this verse?

**Prayer:**

Tell God how grateful you are for any goals or pursuits he has placed on your heart. Commit your goals to God and ask him for courage, guidance, and strength to pursue your goals in a manner that will bring glory to him.

# What Does the Great Commission Have to Do with Teams?

Friday, February 3, 2017

Let's play a game. I'll give you a well-known line, and you try to think of the television show or movie from which it comes.

*"You want to be where everybody knows your name."*

*"We're going to make our dreams come true. Doin' it our way."*

*"You've got a friend in me."*

*"So no one told you life was going to be this way."*

*"Thank you for being a friend. Traveled down the road and back again. Your heart is true you're a pal and a confidant."*

In case you're not singing the theme songs to "Cheers," "Laverne and Shirley," "Toy Story," "Friends," or "The Golden Girls" already - now you are. You're welcome. Friendships are what make us human. These relationships are powerful, and poets, musicians, and authors have been writing about this relationship for ages. The famous friendships mentioned above all have one thing in common - they are give-and-take relationships. You cannot have a good friend without *being* a good friend. Taken another way, we can't continually take counsel from others without being willing to pass it on to someone else.

Last year, we learned about some famous mentor/mentee relationships: Moses mentored Joshua, Elijah mentored Elisha, Paul mentored Timothy. But the mentees did not just absorb the wisdom imparted upon them. They used

it. Joshua took the leadership training Moses provided and led Israel into the Promised Land. Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle and continued the work Elijah had started. Timothy used the leadership skills he learned from Paul to continue to grow the early Christian church in Ephesus. While these men were being mentored, they were humble toward their mentor. They had the posture that Ben referred to this past weekend - they asked "help me understand" questions. They humbly listened to the wise counsel provided, made sure that they understood what they were being told, and then did something with it.

This week you were challenged to start thinking about your team. These are people whom you believe you can learn from, who can offer insight into your struggles and provide suggestions. Nehemiah surrounded himself with his own team when reconstructing the wall. He had goldsmiths, builders, perfume-makers, trumpeters, and priests. He had men in his life who helped him fulfill his life's purpose. He allowed them to step into his life and help him through the good times and the hard times of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Now think of someone who might need you. Is there someone in your life who is struggling with some of the things that you have successfully navigated in the past? Are you willing to take the teaching that you have gleaned from your team and become a member of someone else's? Remember that God wants us to use what we have been given to help others grow. Just as Nehemiah had his team, he was also using his wisdom and experience to lead others. He did not just take from those around him; he poured back into others.

We get a glimpse into the last interaction Jesus had with his disciples at the end of Matthew. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he had some parting words for his disciples. They were gathered together on a mountain, and if they had any doubt that Jesus was the Son of God, he put it to rest there. He gave them the Great Commission. He challenged them to take everything that they had learned under his leadership and share it with the world.

### **Matthew 28:19-20**

***<sup>19</sup>Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."***

What emotions do you think the disciples experienced as they heard these parting words from Jesus?

Who in your life can benefit from the life experience and wisdom that you uniquely have? Can you see yourself as a mentor?

**Prayer:**

Thank God for putting people in our lives that help us grow. Ask him to reveal those whom you might learn from and those who could learn from you. Ask him for courage to share your experience and wisdom with those around you. Ask him to reveal.