

The 5 Kinds of People in the Church , The Book of Nehemiah

The book of Nehemiah is essentially a lesson about the work of God. In this case, the historical work of God that needed to be done was a very practical, tangible thing: the walls of Jerusalem had to be rebuilt. The book of Nehemiah is jam-packed full of lessons about how the work of God grows, thrives and succeeds. It teaches us about leadership, being the kind of person God greatly uses. It teaches us about the enemies of the work of God , what tactics they use, how to deal with them effectively. It teaches us what to do when discouraged. It teaches us about teamwork, about encouraging others. Wonderfully, the story ends with great success.

Ever heard of VIPs? Well, in the book of Nehemiah, we find 5 kinds of people. In a general sense, we find them in every church. They are VUPs, VTPs, VNPs, VDPs and VWP's.¹

V.U.P's - Very Useful People

Example: Nehemiah

VUPs are committed to building. Once a VUP has been here, you will know it. They build up the work of God. VUPs are not interested in building their own name, or their own ministry, but God's. VUPs, like Nehemiah, have a mind to work. Nehemiah from start to finish is encouraging, rebuking, teaching, training, planning organizing, influencing, controlling. He does not worry about the threat to personal reputation or even well-being. he is devoted to building. He says, "This is a great work, so that I cannot come down!"

There are other VUPs in Nehemiah: the whole chapter 3 has people whom God has listed for us for all eternity that built His work. They sacrificed and impacted the work of God. VUP is not a VIP; it is not Very Important work, or very prominent work, but very useful. Whatever section of the wall God gives you, whether it's the behind the scenes mixing of cement or making bricks, or the visible building, it doesn't matter so long as you build.

What makes a VUP? Jesus said "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail" That tells us that He is the one doing it, not us. Therefore, when we are very useful, it is because we have been used by Him, not because we set out to do stuff for Him. It is surrendering your life to Him so that he can use you. Surrender , consecration, giving yourself over to God. You dedicate yourself totally to Him and His work. You do this in two ways ,with your heart, and with your life.

Heart: every day learning to surrender a little more, learning to disobey a little less , loving Him in a deeper way. Being in the Word & prayer .

Life: Separating from evil and cleansing your life from whatever hinders you. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." 2 Timothy 2:4

Why should we do this? By emptying yourself of you and getting more of Him, you get His heart. Once you have His heart, like Nehemiah , you will want to build His work , you will surrender to His power. Many people claiming to build for God today too often they are actually competing with His work , building towers for themselves.

¹ This outline VUPs, VIPs etc comes from Dr Charles Kean.

VUPs in churches and Christian organizations leave their mark as people that built the work of God. God has been reflected through their lives. The church of Jesus Christ is stronger and healthier for their input. The church is better , more Christlike because of VUPs.

V.T.P's , Very Teachable People

Example: Nehemiah Chapter 8

It's a fascinating account in chapter 8 of people who called the preacher, and stood for hours and listened to the Word. They then repented in tears and in mourning and in chapter 9 make drastic changes to their lives. They were very teachable. Ask people today, "Are you teachable?" They'll say "Of course". But I'd like to give you a new definition of teachable. Teachable is not someone who wants to **learn**. Teachable is someone who wants to **change**. There are many people who sit through messages every Sunday, who read Christian books and even their Bibles and they enjoy it , but they simply enjoy knowledge. They enjoy ideas, doctrine, theology. They like mental stimulation. But they are not teachable. A teachable person is someone who recognises his or her need for change in their life. Like these Israelites. They had messed up, and didn't want to do it again. VTPs are Christians that say, I am not what I should be , I want to be more like Jesus. Not only in your service , but in your character. Let me say that the more Christlike you become, the more practically effective you will be in your daily tasks. Christlikeness is not pie-in-the-sky , it is living life the way your were meant to. VTPs are the step before VUPs. You'll never be useful if you're not teachable. If the attitude is, "I've been a Christian all my life , there is nothing new under the sun! I've heard it all before said in different way" , you're in trouble. What you are saying is you are content with your spiritual life and state as it is. That should never be the case. Thank God for His grace to be where you are and press toward the mark.

V.N.P's , Very Nice People

Example: Tekoite nobles Chapter 3:5

The nobles here were VNPs , they were there, they didn't do any harm, but they didn't get involved. They didn't put their necks to the work.

VNPs don't do much harm, but they don't do much good either. VNPs are nice, pleasant people. They greet you with a smile, have good manners, treat everyone fairly, don't step on any toes. But ultimately, they are too afraid, or too lazy to really get their hands dirty. VNPs are the Sunday morning-only Christians. VNPs tell you about what they once did for God, but not anymore. VNPs are harmless but tragically, useless too. Like the servant who got 1 talent, their motto is "I didn't lose it! Here it is!!"

They're afraid of sacrifice. VNPs are afraid of taking up their cross and putting their necks to the work of the Lord. They keep a cautious distance. When VUPs say, "Let us rise up and build", VNPs say, "Amen! Let them rise up and build". The tragedy of VNPs is what they lose , time everyday to serve God and store up rewards eternally. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Matt 16:25.

V.D.P's , Very Draining People

Example: Israelites in chapter 13

Here Israelites got involved in sins that they knew well were wrong, Sabbath breaking, intermarrying with unbelievers. Nehemiah had to take time off from his important work to rebuke, and change and command. Very Draining people. VDPs sap the work and the time and the attention of VUPs to their concerns. VDPs drain because they expect others to carry their own load. Galatians 6:2-5 :” Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. ⁴But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵For every man shall bear his own burden” See, we are to bear one another’s burdens, yet there is an individual load that no one else can carry for us.

So VDPs refuse to carry their own load. Your own load is the total weight of your own spiritual responsibilities as a Christian, as a husband, wife, father, mother, relative, church member, whatever your responsibilities. No one can carry your load for you. God has promised in I Corinthians 10:13 that He will not allow you to be tempted above that which you are able. He will give you grace

VDPs are not always looking for counsel, for advice, for wisdom. They are looking for attention. They are not helpless, they are pride majoring on ‘weakness’ i.e. self-pity.

VDPs in a church or even in an organization like this exist in a permanent state of self-pity - no one cares for me, no one is interested in me. They consider themselves so neglected and misunderstood. They get involved in problems which others must solve, problems which mature believers would avoid entirely. VDPs are basically grown-up spiritual babies. VDPs slow the work, tire the workers, discourage the leaders, and exhaust resources on themselves. They take, but never give, Appetite for attention, but no attitude of servanthood.

V.W.P's , Very Wicked People

Example , Sanballat and Tobiah

For half of the book, Sanballat and Tobiah are devoted to destroying the work of God. They use every trick in the book, slander, mockery, intimidation, lies and more. Ultimately, they fail , because it’s God’s work. But VWPs are devoted to breaking down the work of God. I don’t know if VWPs are saved, maybe some are, but they are all being used by the devil to try and destroy. VDPs slow down the work, but VWPs try to break it down. Sanballat and Tobiah did so because they were jealous and threatened. They did not want this work to stand and Nehemiah’s God to be glorified. And so their jealousy and insecurity caused them to try and stop it. Sadly, people like that exist in our churches. They feel that if they are not consulted on every decision, if they are not directing the work, they will break it down. They require that every brick have their name on it for them to be happy. Otherwise, they will tear down. Why else do people criticize? To make themselves look better. VWPs sadly work behind the scenes, trying to undo what VUPs are building. They gather groups around themselves and gossip. They spread half-truths and lies about the leadership, and the church, they play the leaders and the people off each other, they even threaten

and intimidate people. They seek to pour water on the excited spirit of some, so that all can join them in their selfish quest. But VWPs will not last: 'the gates of hell will not prevail' Worse, you're fighting God.

When you disagree with other believers, you do it along Biblical lines. Don't try and undo the work of God to build it your way. God's not in that. If you must disagree finally, do like Abraham and Lot, you go your way, I'll go mine. Except in the case of false doctrine, which you expose and rebuke publicly, issues of personality and leadership style, sort it out privately and Biblically. Don't hurt God's church, or his work, you will gain no reward for it.

What are you? VUP? Are you building? Leaving your mark? If you're daily consecrating your heart and your life, that could be you.

VTP? Are you hungering for the Word of God? Do you desire to change?

VNP? Are you 'satisfied to sit'? If you're afraid of getting involved, this could be you.

VDP? Are you paralyzed with self-pity?, if you refuse to grow up and carry your own load, this could be you.

VWP? Are you unwittingly becoming a 'destroyer', if you want God's work done only your way, this could be you.

May God give us churches filled with VUPs and VTPs. May we seek to be those kind of people- with 'a mind to work'.