

**“A Challenge to Join”
Nehemiah 2:9-20**

I. A Challenge to make History

A) What God had put in his heart

- 1) His Secret mission
- 2) His secret inspiration

Colossians 1:25-29

B) What God had accomplished in his past

- 1) Past Faithfulness ignites individual faith

“God’s past _____ is meant to be a stepping stone to tomorrow’s faith _____”

- 2) Past Faithfulness ignites group faith

II. A Challenge to Join

A) Look around, we are in danger

B) We are suffering shame

C) Let us rise up to build

1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 5:11-13

“We don't choose what we will do for God; He invites us to join Him where He wants to involve us.” — Henry T. Blackaby, Experiencing God

III. A Challenge from Enemies

Remember this is first and foremost ... your life is a _____.

A) Opponents of the Work of God

- 1) Rationale for Opposition Ezra 2:59-62
- 2) Resolve to Oppose God Ezra 4:11-16

B) Faith in the God who Works

Isaiah 40:26-31
Ezra 7:27-28

William Wilberforce and the Clapham group's Principles to Accomplish the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Britain

- **Set clear goals.**
Set specific goals – as did Wilberforce: "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the Reformation of Manners."
- **Know the Biblical and theological basis that motivates your cause.**
Make sure the work has been done to ensure that your interpretation of the [Bible](#) is solid and the application is legitimate. Steer away from personal preferences and political prejudices.
- **Have confidence in the cause and the truth.**
Be convinced of the rightness and righteousness of your cause - confident that in time, you will prevail. Small minorities, over time, can make a huge impact. It is estimated that Christians represented less than 10 percent of the Roman Empire in 313 when the Edict of Toleration reversed government policy and gave the church legal standing in the empire.
- **Get the evidence.**
It is not enough to ignite emotional support. Meticulous research should be carried out to get the best data and irrefutable, substantiated facts to support your case.
- **Join with others of like mind.**
Wilberforce knew he could not sustain the battle alone, so he linked up with a support community to pray, work, and struggle together. The Clapham group is an incredible case study of the power of co-operative efforts among those committed to a cause.
- **Maintain the foundation of prayer.**
Wilberforce knew repeated times of defeat and discouragement. He sought refuge in God and was unapologetic in his acknowledgment of how he depended on the prayers of others. In his letter to John Newton of September 6, 1788, he poured out his heart: ". . . and in truth tis often matter of solid comfort to me, and of gratitude to the bountiful Giver of mercies, to reflect that the prayers of many of the well beloved of the Lord are offered up for me: O my dear Sir, let not your hands cease to be lifted up, lest Amalek prevail - entreat for me that I may be enabled by divine grace to resist and subdue all the numerous enemies of my salvation. My path is particularly steep and difficult and dangerous."
- **Don't give up when setbacks are encountered.**
When it seemed that they were decisively defeated, this group would not accept such reversals as final. They regrouped and came back to advance their cause again and again, no matter how many times they were defeated.
- **Rise above personal attacks.**
Keep the focus on the issue and not on responding to personal attacks or denigrating opponents that will surely arise in a climate of hostility or partisanship.
- **Understand the opponent's viewpoint.**
Represent your opponents position accurately and work to address it in an integrous way providing better solutions and rationale re: your viewpoint.
- **Accept incremental victories.**
Gradual change and progress is better than no progress at all. Just as most immoral policies and situations developed over time slowly eroding God honoring practices, so too, consistent incremental progress is often the means to victory. At times compromise is better than stalemate or defeat.
- **Cultivate a broad base of support.**
Take your case to the common man. A grass root mentality is often the best way to awaken moral conscience if governmental leadership turns a deaf ear to your cause.
- **Address the larger picture.**
Deal with the dominant issue at hand, but realize that this issue is one of many that are rooted in the misery of a fallen world with world views and ideologies that are contrary to God's will.
- **Maintain integrity.**
Work through legitimate, established means to pursue your goals, not resorting to violence or dirty tactics, convinced that truth and right is on your side.
- **Commit the venture, progress, and results to the Lord.**
The conviction that they were simply obeying a mandate of the Gospel will sustain you. Commit your energies and passions to God, who will providentially guide the historical situation and bring about change when and how He sees fit.