

## **ELEVATE: Join With What Is Good**

### **Session #1: Seize the Day!**

**Session Objective:** To demonstrate how God can work through one visionary leader and a community of people to make a significant impact. To challenge students to consider how they can go with what is good by serving together to make a difference in your local community.

**Minimum Prep:** Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur.

## Session Outline

### Leader Preamble:

To begin this new series, I would like to share one of Tony Campolo's personal experiences. As I read, try to imagine being in Tony's place – how would you feel? What would you do?

Tony tells the story of a recent visit to the war-torn country of Haiti. He was on the landing strip of a small airport waiting to be picked up and flown back to the United States. Tony is a frequent visitor to Haiti and has established several ministries that care for children and orphans with AIDS. As he stood there searching the sky for his aeroplane ride home, a woman came toward him holding a little baby. The baby was emaciated. His arms and legs hung from his little body as though they were sticks. The child's stomach was swollen four or five times the normal size, not because he had eaten too much but because he had nothing to eat at all. Digestive fluids had eaten up the insides of the child and the swelling was the inevitable result. The woman held up the child and began to plead with Tony: "Take my baby! Take him with you! Please take my baby! If you don't take him, he will die!"

Tony tried to tell her that there was nothing he could do. He tried to explain to her about immigration laws and visa applications but she didn't understand, she just kept weeping and trying to push her baby into Tony's arms.

Finally Tony's little aeroplane arrived and he climbed up into the cabin as quickly as he could and he banged on the pilot's chair and yelled, "Get us out of here as quick as you can!" The woman was alongside of the plane, holding her dying baby in one arm and banging on the side of the plane with the other. But the aeroplane pulled away from her and went quickly down the landing strip and climbed into the air and began to head back to America.

Let's break here for a minute and hear from one another. If you were in Tony's place, how would you have felt? What would you have done? (Pause here for some discussion)

To finish Tony's story:

Tony let out a deep breath and laid his head back on the headrest. About halfway home Tony finally realized who he had left on that airstrip. He had left Jesus. Echoing through his mind were the words from Scripture: *"For I was hungry and you fed Me not. I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink. I was sick and you cared for Me not. For in as much as you did it not unto the least of these you did it unto Me."*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Tony Campolo, Let Me Tell You A Story (Nashville: Word, 2000), 24-25.

Tony's experience in Haiti and similar experiences in other parts of the world have developed in him a compelling passion and have powerfully motivated him to action. God has used that passion and action to see hundreds of lives forever changed through Tony supporting innovative ministries.

As you reflected on this story, there was a similar theme in your responses – a deep passion for taking action to make a difference. This next series is all about developing a deep passion for taking action to make a difference. This series is entitled, "Join With What Is Good" and combining passion with action is the supernatural outcome of following Christ. In the next two weeks, we are going to take lessons from people who took action and joined with what is good. The following week, we are going to take some actions steps of our own.

**Leader Note:** If you have planned ahead, you can share some big picture details of the experience your students will be involved in.

### **Small Group Questions:**

**Leader Introduction:** The first person we are going to learn from is a man named Nehemiah who lived in Old Testament times. He was the cupbearer for the King of the land. His people, the Israelites, had known God intimately and had seen many miracles, but their repeated disobedience led to their capture, exile, and disgrace. In the first chapter of Nehemiah, he hears some news about a remnant of his people still in Jerusalem. Read Nehemiah 1:1-4

#### **1. Does anybody have an idea why the wall being destroyed is such a big deal to Nehemiah?**

*In that time, without the protection of a fortress wall, the people were defenceless against their enemies. This would be like endlessly camping without a trailer or tent in the midst of neighbouring grizzly bears. The imagery of Jerusalem without a wall also portrayed how God's people had been separated from Him (His blessing and protection too) through their disobedience.*

*Also, with limited equipment, rebuilding a wall around an entire city was a gigantic problem!*

#### **2. Nehemiah's response was to weep, for some days he mourned and fasted and prayed. Are there any issues in your community that you are deeply passionate about – issues that break your heart?**

**Leader:** Read Nehemiah 2:17-18. Through prayer, God put a giant vision for making a difference through action on Nehemiah's heart. Read Nehemiah 3:1-5 and glance quickly over the rest of the chapter. Follow-up with this question:

**3. Although Nehemiah had a gigantic vision, how does chapter 3 illustrate what was needed to make the vision reality?**

*Chapter 3 illustrates in great detail how the people joined with what was good by taking action. Various families took responsibility for a section of the vision (the wall). Without the people joining Nehemiah, the vision was virtually dead.*

*It's also important to note that chapter 3 shows God used people with different gifts for this purpose – Nehemiah led, others managed, and others...*

**Leader:** We are going to read some excerpts from Nehemiah to help us answer this question:

**4. What obstacles and challenges did Nehemiah and his team face?**

Read: 2:10, 2:19, 4:1-3, 4:7-8, 4:10-12, 6:2-4

*They faced lots of opposition. Verses 4:10-12 also show the people getting discouraged in light of the high costs they had to pay and the overwhelming size of the task.*

**Leader:** We are going to read some more verses from Nehemiah to help us answer this question:

**5. How did Nehemiah respond? Read 2:20, 4:4-5, 4:9, 6:9b, 14**

*Nehemiah responded most often with prayer. He trusted God and took practical steps (i.e. He posted guards).*

Amazingly enough, we read in 6:15-16 (read it now) – after nearly a century without a wall, the wall is rebuilt in 53 days! The remainder of Nehemiah is about the people celebrating, confessing, and dedicating to God.

**6. As you compare the people's responses after the wall is built to Nehemiah's understanding of their condition without the wall in chapter 1, how have they changed? Why have they changed?**

*By joining with what is good, the people not only built a wall that brought them protection, they were also transformed in the process. Through the opposition and challenge they remembered God's faithfulness, they were convicted of their own sinfulness and they began a new and deep relationship with God – they couldn't live the same again. (Sounds like a mission experience doesn't it?)*

**7. When you look at the world today – there are so many problems. But, there are also many organizations (Christian ones and not) working day and night to bring solutions. What holds us back from joining with what is good? What are the costs to holding back?**

