



Week 1

## How to Use this Life Group Guide

1. Review your notes from Mark's message.
2. Read Mark's blog - [www.churchatrockcreek.com/mark-evans](http://www.churchatrockcreek.com/mark-evans) (copied below).
3. Write out your answers to the questions that follow.
4. Discuss your answers with your Life Group.

## Mark's Blog:

### First Priority? Or Last Resort?

Call it the Facebook phenomenon.

Or the Twitter effect.

However you want to label it, there's no escaping the fact that we live in an increasingly connected world, with all kinds of new tools to expand our social networks. You know we've reached a tipping point when perfectly good nouns have morphed into verbs – as in, "to friend someone on Facebook."

What's really going on, of course, is simply the digital application of an age-old saying: "It's not what you know, it's who you know." The more people you "friend," the better your connections. The more people you can get to join your Twitter feed, the greater your influence. Six degrees of separation has given way to the apps on that phone in your pocket.

The generally accepted wisdom goes something like this: If you know the right people, you can get things done. If you run in the right circles, the doors will open before you. It's all about the networking and connections.

It's tempting to think that's all you need. I mean, if you can bend the ear of those in power, and sway them to your point of view, what more do you want? Let's get the project started!

Which is why I'm always amazed when I study the life of Nehemiah. In a pre-digital culture, he had the "friend" thing going on big time, networking his way into the inner circle of the most powerful man in the country. The Bible describes his position as "cupbearer to the King" – which may sound like a lowly servant position to our ear, but don't be misled. Think more along the lines of "Senior Advisor to the President" and you'll be in the right ballpark. This was a guy who had the trust and confidence of the most influential person on the planet – and knew it.

If Nehemiah wanted to get something done, all he had to do was tap into his network. So what did he actually do, first and foremost, when faced with a daunting challenge?

He prayed.

And not some perfunctory "please bless what I'm about to do" type of prayer, either. Oh no. Nehemiah's prayer was a four-month-long exercise in praise, confession, confidence and commitment. He reminded himself of God's attributes and promises, and lingered in His presence until the timing was right.

If we're honest about it, most of us approach the unexpected challenges in our life from the opposite direction. When faced with a difficult situation, our first inclination is to immediately think through our network – who do we know that can help us solve this dilemma?

All too often, it's only after we've exhausted our connections that we even think to bring God into the equation. But as Nehemiah reminds us, that's getting it all backwards.

The bigger the challenge – and the better your connections – the more you need to pray. It needs to be the starting point, not the afterthought. If Nehemiah teaches us anything, he teaches us this:

We can do more than pray. But we shouldn't do anything until we pray.

# be still

## Reflection and Discussion

1. What difficult situation are you facing right now?

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2. How have you been trying to handle it, up to this point?

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3. Why is it so tempting to turn to our network of friends and family for help first, instead of God?

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4. Read John 15:5. What does Jesus mean when He calls Himself "the vine" and us "the branches"? How does that translate into your everyday life?

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5. How do we try to circumvent the "abiding" relationship Jesus calls us to? Why?

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6. Read Psalm 20:7 and Psalm 146:3. What do those verses teach you?

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7. In what specific ways does your approach to dealing with "unexpected obstacles" need to change? What are you willing to do about it?

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