Leadership Lessons from Nehemiah

Lesson 1: Effective Leadership
Nehemiah Chapter 1, the Value of Prayer

Background: The book was likely written by Ezra about the events of 445-420 BC. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king of Persia and lived in the palace in Shushan. This shows that Nehemiah was highly trusted to play that important role in the world's leading empire.

Topic: This book focuses on restoring the walls of the city of God, Jerusalem, and His people. Nehemiah teaches us leadership by motivating people from every walk of life to come together and rebuild the city.

I. Ask the Right Questions!

Nehemiah 1:1–3 *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, [2] That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. [3] And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.*

A. If we don't ask the right questions, we won't have the correct answers.

    1. Nehemiah heard about the destruction but asked how the people who had returned to Jerusalem were doing.

B. The three essential questions to ask:

    1. Who are you going to serve? Is Jesus Christ your Savior and Lord?

    2. What are you going to do with your life? What is your divine purpose?

        a. When you live with divine purpose, you will have divine appointments.

        1 Timothy 1:9 *He saved us and <u>called us with a holy calling</u>, not by our own works, but by His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

        b. Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:17–19 speaks about the need to know God, know your calling, and know what He invested in you to accomplish what He called you to do.

Ephesians 1:17–20 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: [18] The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, [19] And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

3. Who are you going to marry?

    a. This question can affect the other two if you marry someone who is not saved and serving God.

        1 Corinthians 15:33–34 *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. [34] Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*

    b. You need people who help you wake up to righteousness, not sin.

    c. Getting where God wants you to go is hard without the right relationships.

    d. Relationships are key, so guard your relationships. Be around people who will invest in your spiritual growth. Also, have relationships that help you in the natural because we live in a natural world.

C. Nehemiah asked and got the right answers. He did not ignore the reality of the situation.

    1. He saw that the wall was broken down, and the gates were burned with fire.

II. Pray to the God of Heaven

Nehemiah 1:4 *And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.*

A. When Nehemiah heard about the situation, he prayed to God. He sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed.

    1. Pray to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

    Psalm 46:1 *God is my refuge and God is my strength. He's a very present help in trouble.*

    Psalm 27:1 *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalm 91:1 *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

Ephesians 3:14–15 *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [15] Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*

B. Nehemiah recognized who God is.

Nehemiah 1:5 *And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments.*

1. He is the one true God, the self-existent eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the great and awesome God who keeps His covenant and is merciful.

2. When you recognize who God is and begin to trust and believe in Him, then He can help in your situation. Bottom line: love Him and keep His Word!

C. Nehemiah recognized the real problem—it was sin and self, not God.

Nehemiah 1:6–7 *Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. [7] We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.*

1. Sin always brings bondage.

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death.*

Psalm 51:1–5 *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. [2] Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. [3] For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. [4] Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. [5] Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

2. Humans are born in sin and work in sin. If we take responsibility for the way things are, we can move in a different direction.

D. Nehemiah recognized the answer.

Nehemiah 1:8–10 *Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: [9] But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. [10] Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.*

1. The answer was:

    a. God's Word.

        John 15:7 *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

    b. God's name and redemption.

        John 14:12–14 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. [13] And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

2. He acknowledged his human frailty and the Lord's covenant blessing.

E. Nehemiah knew who held the keys to His victory.

Nehemiah 1:11 *O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.*

1. Nehemiah recognized he needed favor. Because of Jesus, we have authority in the name of Jesus that he didn't have under the Old Covenant. Nehemiah wanted to accomplish something that was spiritual, but he lived in a natural world and needed favor with the government's leader.

    Psalm 5:12 *For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

2. Jesus had favor with spiritual, financial, and governmental leaders, which helped Him accomplish what God called Him to do.

    Luke 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*

3. Old Testament people who experienced governmental favor:

    a. Joseph (Genesis 39:4, 21; 41:38)
    b. Esther (Esther 2:15, 5:8)
    c. Daniel (Daniel 1:9)

Conclusion: Know where to run in times of need—to Jesus. Whenever we ask in the name of Jesus, we win!

Go Deeper

God put it in Nehemiah's heart to address the problem in Jerusalem. Some people don't care, are paralyzed by their problems, and lose hope, giving up. Nehemiah chose to partner with God to make a change in the situation.

- What problem are you facing that you can partner with God to change?

Remember, you have a holy calling and a divine purpose for your life.

- Do you know what it is?
- How are you developing in your divine purpose?
- What steps can you take to accomplish what God has put in your heart?

You only need one word from God. One word from God can change your entire destination and financial picture, and turn you from death to life.

- What scripture is God speaking to your situation?

Declaration: “I have favor with God. I have favor with man. I have a good understanding, and I have supernatural increase.”