Leadership Lessons from Nehemiah

Lesson 2: Build God's Plan
Nehemiah Chapter 2, the Value of Purpose

Background: Chapter 2 takes place in the month of Nisan in King Artaxerxes's 20th year. The month of Nisan was four months after the month of Chisleu, about 90 to 120 days after he heard about the situation in Jerusalem.

I. God Uses Common People

Nehemiah 2:1–4 *And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. [2] Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, [3] And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? [4] Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.*

A. Pray First

    1. Get instructions from heaven, and think before you act. Get clear direction from God, so you don't make major mistakes.

    1. Nehemiah prayed almost twice as long as it took him to complete the 52 days of work on the wall (Nehemiah 6:15).

    2. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed to pray and ask His Father for help, don't you think we need to pray and ask our Father for help?

    1 Timothy 2:1 *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; [2] For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

B. To go into the king's court as a cupbearer was a high position in the government. It required honesty because he tasted everything before the king to ensure no one could poison him.

    1. If you went in sad before the king, you were taking your life in your own hands.

    2. God uses common and honest people.

3. In Acts 6:3, the disciples needed to appoint people to care for the widows. They chose *“seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.”*

4. Do everything with integrity and do what it takes.

C. Nehemiah showed that he was sad because he lived from his heart.

1. Nehemiah recounted the city's situation: it was in ruins, and the gates were consumed by fire. He was sad because it was the city of his fathers, God's people.

D. The king asked, “What do you want?”

1. Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven before answering.

II. Live with Purpose

Nehemiah 2:5–9 *And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. [6] And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. [7] Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; [8] And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me. [9] Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.*

A. He had a purpose. He had a vision to rebuild the city of God.

B. If you have a vision but no plan, you're going nowhere. Some people have visions, see all this stuff, and accomplish almost none of it.

1. There are practical steps to fulfill the vision: purpose, vision, plan, and volition.

C. Nehemiah asked for letters of favor from the government.

1. He understood what was needed.

D. The king granted favor according to the good hand of God upon Nehemiah.

1. Nehemiah had favor with business people, favor in the government, favor in finance, and favor with God.

2. God gives favor!

III. Inspection Proceeds Possession

Nehemiah 2:10–16 *When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. [11] So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. [12] And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. [13] And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. [14] Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. [15] Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. [16] And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.*

A. Nehemiah saw the obstacles.

1. Sanballat and Tobiah were enemies of the children of God. They were upset that Nehemiah sought the welfare of God's people.

2. People who never face opposition or giants won't possess their promised land.

3. God's people don't need to fear because God is with them.

   Numbers 14:9 *Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.*

B. Nehemiah knew when to speak and when to hold his peace.

1. He got the vision inside of him, saw the obstacles, saw the need, and took a few people with him at night.

C. Nehemiah saw the need.

1. The report he had received earlier was true. The walls were broken down and burned with fire.

IV. Nehemiah Shared the Vision

Nehemiah 2:17–20 *Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. [18] Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. [19] But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? [20] Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.*

A. Nehemiah acknowledged the distress of the situation but shared his vision to rebuild the wall to end the reproach.

B. Nehemiah told them that the hand of God was on him, and he had the king's word of favor.

C. The people were encouraged to join in building the wall.

D. Nehemiah ignored the mockery and renewed his plan to rebuild with God's help.

Psalm 25:28 *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.*

Conclusion: We are God's people. We can accomplish His purpose with His plan.

Go Deeper
When you face opposition, it doesn't mean that God is against you. Giants are bread for your food. If you're not fighting any giants, you're not taking the land God wants you to take. Some people are accomplishing nothing and going nowhere. If you never deal with giants, you will never possess what God promised you.

- What giants are you fighting?
- How can you apply Nehemiah's approach of standing against opposition, focusing on the purpose, and speaking of God's favor?

Nehemiah had a plan to rebuild the walls. In the Bible, we also read that Joseph planned to save 20% of the harvest during the seven years of prosperity. What God calls you to do requires a plan.

- Do you have a plan?
- What is your plan? If not, will you seek God and make a plan?

Declaration: I will do what God has purposed in my heart.