Leadership Lessons from Nehemiah

Lesson 8: Heaven-Minded Leaders Keep Joy
Nehemiah Chapters 8–10, the Value of Developing Leaders, Part 2

Prepare for Nehemiah 8–10: Nehemiah was faced with what to do after the wall was finished. The wall was the task for the moment, but the task for life was to develop leaders. He looked for: faithfulness (7:2 faithful and feared God), respect the Word of God (7:3 attentive to the book of the law), and served God with joy (8:10 strength).

I. Live with an Eternal Perspective

Nehemiah 8:16–17 *So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. [17] And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.*

A. The people celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles.

    1. Leviticus 23 names seven Jewish feasts that Israel was to celebrate:
        a. Sabbath - 7th day of rest
        b. Passover and Unleavened Bread commemorate leaving Egypt and going to the Promised Land (Jesus crucified and resurrected-salvation and sanctification)
        c. Firstfruits (Fruit of the Holy Spirit)
        d. Pentecost (Baptism of Holy Spirit
        e. Trumpets (Christ's Coming)
        f. Day of Atonement (Judgment)
        g. Tabernacles (New Heaven and New Earth-Eternity in heaven)

B. We need to live in light of eternity.

Romans 14:7–12 *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. [8] For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. [9] For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. [10] But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. [11] For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. [12] So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

    1. You're affecting somebody, and somebody's affecting you.

C. We need to live with eternal purpose.

2 Corinthians 5:8–10 *(For we walk by faith, not by sight:) [8] We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. [9] Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. [10] For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

II. Remember the Goodness of God

Nehemiah 9:19–25 *Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. [20] Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. [21] Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.*

[22] Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. [23] Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. [24] So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would. [25] And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

A. God's goodness to the Israelites included:
    1. Merciful: Did not forsake them, led them in the wilderness (cloud, fire).
    2. Gave good spirit; sustained them (lacked nothing).
    3. Gave them kingdoms and nations (possessed the land).
    4. Multiplied them; brought them into the promised land to possess it.
    5. Subdued their enemies.
    6. Took strong cities, and a fat land.
    7. Possessed houses full of all goods, wells, and vineyards.

        a. Continued to delight in God's great goodness.
        b. These things happened 1100-1200 years earlier when they came out of Egypt.

B. They remembered God's goodness to them even though they had been unfaithful to Him.

Nehemiah 9:35–37 *For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. [36] Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: [37] And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.*

1. Remember all the good things that happened that are evidence of His grace.
2. Rehearse the goodness of God over and over in your mind.

III. Separated Themselves

Nehemiah 10:28–30 *And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; [29] They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; [30] And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, not take their daughters for our sons.*

A. They separated themselves from the people of the lands around them.

2 Corinthians 6:14–18 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? [15] And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [16] And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [17] Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. [18] And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*.

B. They were not to marry from other people groups.

1. Nehemiah was passionate for the truth and called them into accountability:
   a. They had married foreign wives (Nehemiah 13:23).
   b. Their children spoke half in other languages and not in the Jewish language (Nehemiah 13:24).
   c. They followed Solomon’s example of many wives (Nehemiah 13:26).

IV. Restored Worship

Nehemiah 10:34–38 *And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of*

our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law: [35] And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord: [36] Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:

[37] And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. [38] And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. [39] For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

A. Giving is an act of worship.

    1. Mark 4:14:3–11 gives a beautiful example of a woman with an alabaster box who broke it and anointed Jesus.

        a. Others were upset because of the “waste” of expensive perfume.

        b. Jesus praised her, saying that "wherever this gospel is preached, it will be a memorial to her."

        c. Immediately afterward, Judas left and sought a way to betray Jesus.

B. Nehemiah shut business down to take time to worship (Nehemiah 13:15–22).

    1. It's good to take a break from work. Six days are for work and one for rest (Exodus 20:8–11).

    2. The Sabbath was made for God (Mark 2:27).

Conclusion: Nehemiah restored leadership in these areas: family (tribes), church (Priests and Levites), and city (government). The work is not complete until we have someone to carry it on!

Go Deeper
The book of Philippians was written from jail, where Paul had been imprisoned for preaching the gospel. He says, *“Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice”* (Philippians 4:4). Then Philippians 4:6 says, *“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.”* When you're praying and asking God, thank him for it. Finally, in

Philippians 4:8, it says, *“My brethren, whatever's good, lovely, just, honest, of a good report, if there's any virtue, if there's any praise, think on these things.”* If you want to be a great leader in the kingdom of God, you've got to choose what you focus on. Choose to focus on the good and always be rejoicing. There are a lot of difficulties and problems in this world, but don’t dwell on them— focus on the good.

- What good things will you focus on today?

Through the book of Nehemiah, we learned several values: prayer, purpose, vision, people, diligence, giving, focus, and completion.

- Which value do you feel strongest in, and why?
- Which value would you like to improve in, and what will help you improve?
- What has God spoken to you through studying Nehemiah?

Declaration: I will complete the purpose God created me for and build up leaders around me to carry on the work of God.