The Bible in a nutshell

Nehemiah

—by Peter Hammond

“You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.”

Nehemiah 2:17

Distressing situation

News of the trouble and disgrace of the returned exiles in Jerusalem reached Nehemiah. The walls were still broken down and the gates had been burned with fire. Nehemiah sat down, wept, mourned, fasted and prayed. From his regret and repentance, he was led to make a request of the king, to be released to travel to Jerusalem to aid his people in rebuilding the walls of the city. Nehemiah provides us with a proven strategy for success in any venture.

Information and vision

“My people perish for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6. We must be informed. It is when people are informed that they can be inspired of the wall to work on, they were united in a common goal.

Intercession

In response to the threats from the enemies of God’s people, Nehemiah turned to the Lord in prayer: “Hear O our God, for we are despised; turn your reproach on their own heads…” Neh 4:4. This is an example of praying the imprecatory Psalms.

Involvement

Nehemiah encouraged his people: “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” Neh 4:14. The Bible is not a pacifist book. Christians are called to stand up, to step out and to fight the good fight of faith.

With sword and tool

Nehemiah ensured that his people were armed and prepared. The people worked with all their heart, with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. The work is great and extensive and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us!” Neh 4:19-20.

The trumpet

The trumpet bearer remained close to Nehemiah so that when any portion of the wall came under attack, the trumpet would be blown and the other people would rally to that point under attack.

Avoid distraction

The people were united in the common goal and alert to the threats. When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem sought to distract Nehemiah by calling him for a conference, he responded: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?” Neh 6:3. Do not allow yourself to be side-tracked. Seek first the Kingdom of God. We should never allow ourselves to be distracted, deviated, discouraged or drawn away from our duty.

Implementation

Within a mere 52 days, the wall was completed. “And it happened, when all our enemies saw that the wall was repaired, and that they were made to fall by our God, we turned our engines against them and the wall was complete.” Neh 6:16.

Opposition

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem met resistance. Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab, mocked and ridiculed the people of God as they sought to rebuild the wall. They sought to undermine and interfere with the work and spread false charges against Nehemiah and his followers. When God gives you a work to do, satan sends people to waste your time. Some have the gift of criticism and a ministry of discouragement.

The book of Nehemiah teaches us that discouragement and distraction will come our way, but we are to stand firm in the task at hand. Do not be drawn away from your duty.
Nehemiah 9 records a great prayer of repentance and renewal of the Covenant. Repentance lends to rejoicing.

Reformation starts in the home.

As goes the family, so goes the nation. The place to begin reformation is in the home. When Nehemiah discovered that some of the believers had “married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab,” “I contended with them and believers had cursed them, struck some of them, and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying: ‘You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or yourselves... Should we then transgress against our God by marrying pagan women?’” Neh 13:28-30.

Nehemiah stands out as a man who was concerned with justice and efficiency. He believed that God’s glory could be revealed in the nation when reformation began in the home.

Who we marry matters. Marriage involves two families, a community, a nation and the Kingdom of God.

Resolution
Nehemiah stands out as a man of prayer and action. A man of character, courageous and resilient. A man of vision and a gifted organiser, who was able to mobilise the people to complete a great task. Nehemiah is a book of restoration.

Nehemiah organised the people to fulfil this vision, resolutely persevering until all obstacles were overcome. Nehemiah stands out as a man who was both prayerful and practical, one who could sorrow and yet rejoice, one who could be both tough and tender, sensitive to God and to his neighbours. He was concerned with justice and efficiency.

Most of all he was concerned for the Glory of God and the good of His people.

How do you compare?
- Do you have a vision of God?
- Do you have a vision of what God wants done?
- Is the joy of the Lord your strength?

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BIBLE VERSES

YouVersion has released its year-end analysis of how its millions of users engaged the Bible electronically this past year.

1. Psalm 118:24

This is the DAY that the LORD has made; I will REJOICE and be GLAD in IT.

2. Matthew 7:7

“I CAN do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

3. 1 Peter 5:6

“Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy because I am holy.”

4. Isaiah 40:31

“ Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

5. Isaiah 41:10

“Fear not; for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”

6. Hebrews 4:15

“For we have a High Priest who can sympathise with our weaknesses, and was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

7. Ephesians 5:25-26

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word.”

8. Joshua 1:9

“Do not fear or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

9. 2 Timothy 1:7

“The Spirit which God gave you is not of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

10. Psalm 18:2

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my stronghold.”