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# **Nehemiah:**

## **How to do Great Things**



**Pastoral Leader Training Booklet**

# **20**

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You have a great desire to serve the Lord, and do great things for him, don't you!

I sincerely hope that this brief study on Nehemiah will inspire you.

## THE CHALLENGE

In the year 586 before Christ, King Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and taken the Jewish princes into captivity. However, just as the Lord had promised, the Babylonian Empire had collapsed, and the victorious Persians allowed God's people to return to their country. But although they had been back for nearly 100 years, Jerusalem remained in ruins.

Nehemiah was still in Persia, in the responsible position of "cup-bearer to the King" when his relative Hanani arrived.



## 7. Nehemiah persevered in the face of adversity.

A good leader does not give up when things are difficult. Nehemiah was persecuted from within the city, and from without, but was able to maintain his vision, energy and devotion to the task. Jesus said:

*"No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."*

(Luke 9:62)

In your work, are you prepared to persevere to the end?

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If the Lord has called you, and you follow these seven principles, you will achieve great things for God.

May the Lord bless you in your ministry!



## 6. Nehemiah inspired and mobilized his followers.

A real leader is a person who reaches his goals through other people. He achieves this by inspiring them, and delegating to them portions of the work that they can do.

Faced with Nehemiah's dynamic personality, the people followed him enthusiastically, and each one built up a portion of wall, facing their own dwelling.

Are you bossy or do you inspire your followers?

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Do you plan to make changes in the way you lead? If so, what?

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Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The walls of Jerusalem are broken down, and the gates have been burned with fire.



## THE MAN AND HIS VISION

The shock was great for Nehemiah. He wept bitterly, wore mourning clothes, fasted, and prayed to God.

*“O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant with those who love him*



*and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sin we Israelites, including my father's house, and myself have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

*Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

*They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayers of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."*

(Nehemiah 1:5-11)

This was obviously not a list of things thought up at the last minute. Further, on arrival at Jerusalem, Nehemiah was not frantic to begin.

- He acted calmly (waited three days).
- He acted prudently (went out secretly, by night).
- He was thorough (checked everything personally and in detail).

Have you made a concrete analysis of your situation?

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What can you do, to delegate responsibilities more effectively?

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What plans have you, to reach your objective?

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What should you do to improve this aspect of your life?

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If you are not faithful in small things, the Lord will never call you to greater things.

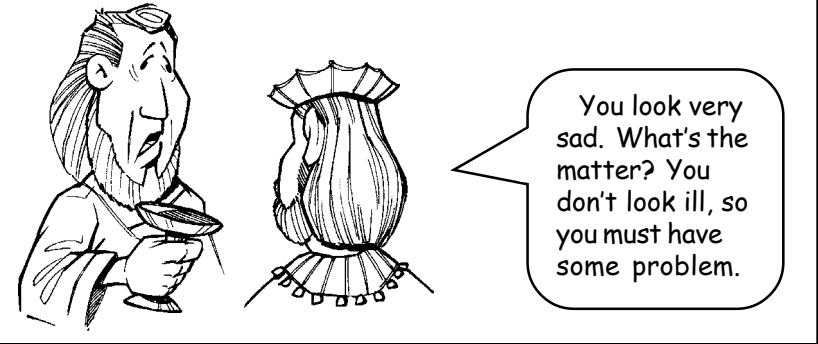
## 5. Nehemiah planned carefully, and seized his opportunities wisely.

When at last the opportunity arose for Nehemiah with the king, it is clear that Nehemiah had worked out exactly what he needed.

At one stroke, he obtained from the king:

- permission to travel,
- letters of recommendation,
- wood for rebuilding,
- and an armed guard.

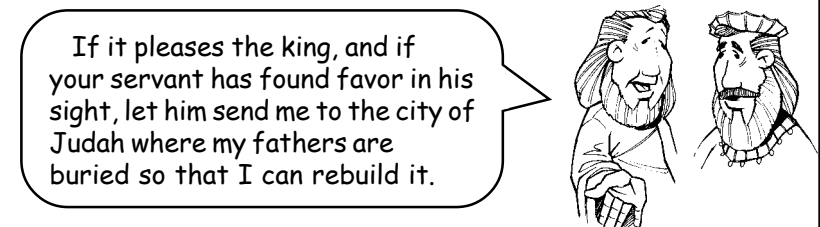
Some months later, the Lord gave Nehemiah an opportunity.



Nehemiah had a great fright, and rightly so, because at that time, kings greatly feared being poisoned.



The king had such a good opinion of Nehemiah that he believed him, and also said: "What is it you want?" With thankful heart, Nehemiah shared his vision with the king.



Nehemiah was so convincing that the king agreed - giving him, as well, letters of recommendation to the governors, construction materials, and an armed guard.



## THE WORK

On reaching Jerusalem, Nehemiah found a shantytown among rubble. A complete disaster, and on top of that, the people were defeated and discouraged.



## 4. Nehemiah was faithful in little things.

Jesus said: *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much”* (Luke 16:10), and that was the case with Nehemiah.

As well as being a man of God, Nehemiah had a secular job. He used his talents and molded his character, so that he rose to become the King’s “cup-bearer” - a job given only to someone the king trusted completely, in a time when poison was a political weapon.

Nehemiah was so good as an employee, that when he presented his need, the king gave Nehemiah all the help needed.

How many are there, who hope to achieve great things, but do not reach their goal because they are not faithful in what they are actually doing?

Are you good at what you are doing? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you strive to improve? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you taken your challenging vision to the Lord in this way? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Nehemiah had a clear, reachable target.

*“Before God, I have the moral duty to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem”* was his goal, and it was difficult, but possible. From then on, that idea was the entire purpose of his life.

How many achievements are lost, through not having clear targets, or an achievable objective!

Which of the following is a clear, reachable objective? A pastor who says:

- ☐ I want to reach the world for Christ.
- ☐ I want to serve the Lord.
- ☐ I want to form three house groups, in three neighboring areas where there’s no church.

What goal do you have in your work?

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Is it clear? \_\_\_\_\_ Is it reachable? \_\_\_\_\_

Nehemiah was a dynamic person, but also cautious. This is why he made a very careful inspection of the whole city, secretly, by night.

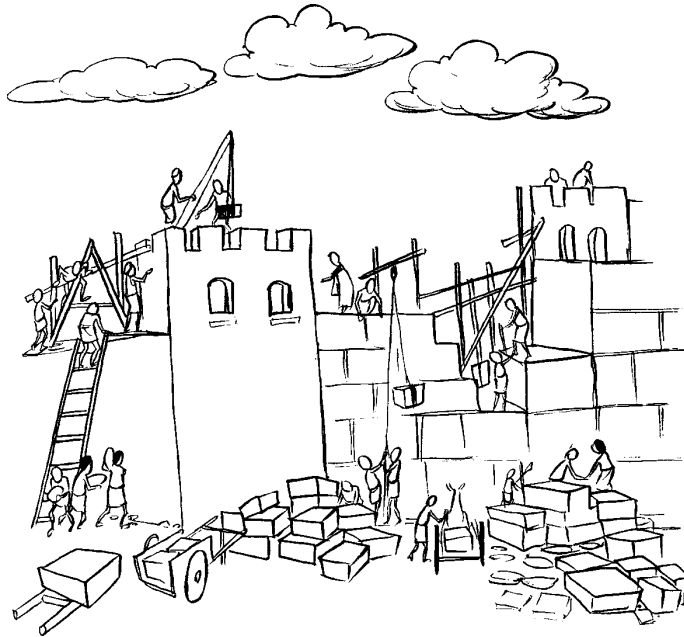


Once he had a clear estimate of the amount of work to be done, and a plan of action ready, he concentrated on the first goal to encourage the disheartened inhabitants of Jerusalem.



*I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and of what the king had said to me. They replied, “Let us start rebuilding.” So they began this good work.*

(Nehemiah 2:18)



Having managed to encourage the people, he put them to work. He mobilized everyone, with all possible resources.

Each group worked in a small section where it most suited them, in front of where they lived. All of them worked priests, Levites and businessmen.

## **1. Nehemiah identified himself with God’s work.**

Many others also knew of the disastrous state of Jerusalem, but Nehemiah was the one who took it to heart, felt ashamed of the situation, and prepared to do something about it.

Do you have this passion for the things of the Lord?

☐ Yes.

☐ No.

What challenge is burning in your heart?

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## **2. Nehemiah took the situation to the Lord.**

Nehemiah did not act on impulse; he took his anguish to the Lord. Kneeling, weeping, he prayed, and the Lord set his heart on fire with a great vision of rebuilding Jerusalem.



## THE DIFFICULTIES

*Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, all the people stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, 'Amen! Amen!' Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground... They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for the fourth of a day, and spent another fourth in confession and in worshipping the Lord their God."*

(Nehemiah 8:1, 8:5-6, 9:3)

This revival put in motion deep social reforms and brought blessings for God's people. All because one man heard God's voice and committed himself to serve him with all his strength.

Do you want to follow his example? \_\_\_\_\_



Nehemiah's life is exciting, isn't it! I advise you to pay heed to this book of the Bible.

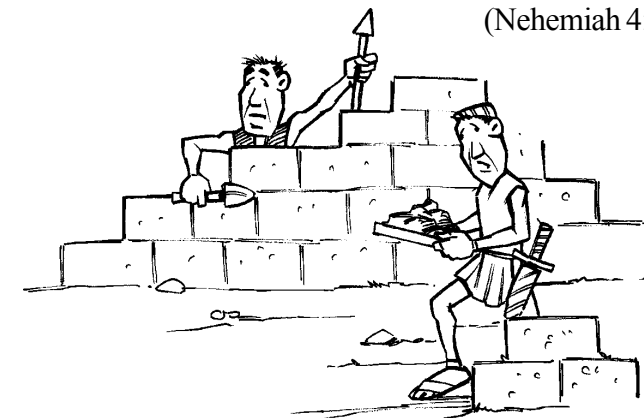
Meantime, what principles can we learn from Nehemiah, so that we, too, can do great things for God?

It wasn't easy; there was opposition from the neighboring princes who did not want to see Jerusalem rebuilt. They threatened to attack and destroy the work.



But Nehemiah did not flag.

*"From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor... Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me."*



(Nehemiah 4:16-18)

Not only was there opposition from without; there were also some internal problems. Some Jews took advantage of others, taking their possessions as surety when they lent money



and food. Nehemiah appealed to their consciences and they answered: *“We will give it back and we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.”* (Nehemiah 5:12)

## THE RESULT

And so, against all odds, what had not been done in 100 YEARS, was achieved in 52 DAYS and the people, joyful and amazed, met to thank God and admire what they had achieved.



One man, impelled by a challenge, consecrated to God, achieved what others had been incapable of doing.

## THE BLESSING

As a result of Nehemiah’s work, there came a great spiritual revival:

*“All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel...”*

