

NEHEMIAH

TAMING THE TASK - BUILDING UP THE WALL

INTRODUCTION

A. Review

1. Nehemiah saw the need because he was a man under authority
 - a. He had a proper view of God
 - b. He sought a proper relationship to God.
 - 1) Through prayer
 - 2) Through knowledge of the Word of God.
 - 3) Through obedience to the Word of God.
2. Nehemiah set priorities that placed people before projects.
 - a. His primary purpose was to affirm the covenant.
 - b. His greatest task was to build up the people of God.

B. Rebuild

1. Nehemiah was a leader committed to building up the people of God.
2. He started by rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem in only 52 days.

A LEADER GOES TO WORK - LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

A. Strategic Planning

1. Gather information
 - a. Ask questions (1:2), *one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah; and I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem.*
 - b. Hear the answers (1:3), *They replied, The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.*
 - c. Seek guidance (1:4-11)
 - 1) He prayed to the God of heaven.
 - 2) He was confident that God would intervene.
 - 3) He had a difficult task - encourage king to reverse his order to stop reconstruction of Jerusalem, note Proverbs 21:1, *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*
 - 4) He was placed in a responsible position, cupbearer, confidant, to the King of Persia.
 - a) One with closest access to the king.
 - b) One who enjoyed the confidence of the king.
2. Wait for the right time to act (2:1), *In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was served him, I carried the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had never been sad in his presence before.*
 - a. Nehemiah waited over 100 days.
 - b. It was New Year when everyone was happy but he was sad.
3. Choose a point of contact (2:2-3), *So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This can only be sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my ancestors' graves, lies waste, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"*
 - a. Desecrated burial places caught the king's attention.
 - b. Persians revered their ancestors and graves were sacred places.

4. Bathe everything in prayer (2:4-5a), *Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.*
 - a. It is necessary.
 - b. It is immediate.
 - c. It is effective.

5. Determine the needs (2:5b-8), *Then I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors' graves, so that I may rebuild it." The king said to me (the queen also was sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a date. Then I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may grant me passage until I arrive in Judah; and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, directing him to give me timber to make beams for the gates of the temple fortress, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the gracious hand of my God was upon me.*
 - a. Nehemiah must go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city of his fathers' tombs.
 - b. He needed a specific amount of time for the project.
 - c. He requested letters of safe passage and permission to acquire timber from the king's forest for construction.

6. Develop strategy (2:9-16), *Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent officers of the army and cavalry with me. When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days. Then I got up during the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. The only animal I took was the animal I rode. I went out by night by the Valley Gate past the Dragon's Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that had been broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool; but there was no place for the animal I was riding to continue. So I went up by way of the valley by night and inspected the wall. Then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest that were to do the work.*
 - a. Prepare for opposition
 - 1) He was under the authority of the king.
 - 2) His project was not in favor with some.
 - 3) He waited 3 days after arrival so he would be ready for the task.
 - b. Make firsthand assessment
 - 1) He went out at night to examine the wall with trusted colleagues.
 - 2) He did not inform the leaders nor the people of his plans.

B. Implementation

1. Recruit volunteers (2:17-20), *Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we may no longer suffer disgrace." I told them that the hand of my God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us start building!" So they committed themselves to the common good. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they mocked and ridiculed us, saying, "What is this that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building; but you have no share or claim or historic right in Jerusalem."*
 - a. He identified with the people, *You see the bad situation we are in.*
 - b. He appealed to their spiritual calling, covenant people of God.
 - c. He gave them something they could do, *rebuild the walls.*

- d. He inspired confidence.
 - 1) Through personal experience.
 - 2) Through continuing trust in their covenant God.
 - e. He handled objections (details in the next message).
2. Assign responsibilities, 3:1-32
- a. Spiritual priority
 - 1) First workers listed were the priests.
 - 2) They set a good example.
 - b. Interdependence
 - 1) The project was too large for a few workers.
 - 2) It was a cooperative effort where they worked side by side.
 - 3) People came from 8 different places within a 20 mile radius.
- C. Evaluation - chapter 7
1. Meet needs (1), *Now when the wall had been built and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed,*
 - a. Physical need was protection - gatekeepers.
 - b. Spiritual need was worship - singers.
 - c. Intellectual need was teaching - Levites.
 2. Promote people carefully (2), *I gave my brother Hanani charge over Jerusalem, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel—for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.*
 - a. His brother Hanani had faithfully served, even bringing news of Jerusalem to Nehemiah in Susa.
 - b. Hananiah was faithful and feared God.
 3. Take necessary precautions (3), *And I said to them, “The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot; while the gatekeepers are still standing guard, let them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, some at their watch posts, and others before their own houses.”*
 - a. Only open the gates during the day.
 - b. Keep them locked and guarded.
 - c. Assign guards to posts in front of their own homes - a real encouragement to faithful service.
 4. Plan for the future (4), *The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few and no houses had been built.*
 - a. The city covered a large area.
 - b. There was need for more people and houses.
 5. Listen for divine guidance (5-60, note chapter 11)
 - a. God wanted the city repopulated.
 - b. People were to be enrolled by genealogies in order to place some of them in Jerusalem.
 - c. Nehemiah then found a list that provided names and locations of returning exiles.

6. Obey God's Word (61-65), *The following were those who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not prove their ancestral houses or their descent, whether they belonged to Israel: the descendants of Delaiah, of Tobiah, of Nekoda, six hundred forty-two. Also, of the priests: the descendants of Hobaiah, of Hakkoz, of Barzillai (who had married one of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite and was called by their name). These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but it was not found there, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean; the governor told them that they were not to partake of the most holy food, until a priest with Urim and Thummim should come.*
 - a. Nehemiah knew what the Law demanded concerning those in the priesthood.
 - b. He ordered that the regulations be obeyed.

7. Be generous (70-72), *Now some of the heads of ancestral houses contributed to the work. The governor gave to the treasury one thousand darics of gold, fifty basins, and five hundred thirty priestly robes. And some of the heads of ancestral houses gave into the building fund twenty thousand darics of gold and two thousand two hundred minas of silver. And what the rest of the people gave was twenty thousand darics of gold, two thousand minas of silver, and sixty-seven priestly robes.*
 - a. People gave sacrificially to the work.
 - b. The governor, Nehemiah, did so, as well.

CONCLUSION

- A. Taming a task demands strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- B. All of this Nehemiah bathed in prayer.
- C. We should develop leadership skills because God's work is worthy of excellence.