Lessons from the Life of Nehemiah

By Charles McCaul
Lessons From the Life of Nehemiah

Part 1

1. Nehemiah received a burden from the Lord and he began praying about it.

   Chapter 1
   - We must have a passion for what we do. We must believe that we have a mission from God and that mission is worth sacrificing for.
   - We must pray and pray repeatedly.

   **Intercession must always be a primary role for leaders.**
   - Prayer internalizes the burden and deepens our ownership of a need.
   - Prayer slows us down to hear from God and receive His direction.
   - Prayer moves us to act.

   - We must decide: "What are we going to do about what we see or feel?"
   - We must make a plan and believe that God is with us.

2. Nehemiah waited for the right time.

   Chapter 2:1-8
   - He prayed for four months.

   **Waiting on God does this:**
   - Allows God to prepare the circumstances and the hearts of the people involved in what He wants us to do.
   - Allows the burden to increase in our hearts.
   - Allows the vision and strategy to form clearly in our minds.
   - Allows a foundation of prayer to be laid.
   - Gives time to prepare behind the scenes.

   - He had prepared his plan and was ready to present his case to the king.
   - He had a specific goal and a time frame in which it would be done.

3. Nehemiah didn't let his lack of experience hinder him.

   Chapter 2:11-16
   - He was a cupbearer to the king.
   - He no doubt researched what needed to be done and consulted others.
   - He went to Jerusalem and spent three days examining the situation.
4. Nehemiah communicated the vision and called the people to respond.
Chapter 2:17-18
- He connected with their hearts.

People must receive you before they will receive your vision (or your God)
- People must see that you really care for them and their welfare.
- People must perceive you as credible. Credibility comes with success and good character
- People must see that you are committed to lead the mission to its successful conclusion.

- He communicated clearly.

How and what do we communicate?
- Communicate where you are going repeatedly.
- Communicate how you will get there.
- Communicate when you anticipate change.
- Communicate to your key leaders frequently.
- Communicate your faith in the Almighty God.
- Communicate when you change your plans.

5. Nehemiah overcame opposition.
Chapter 2:19-20; 4:1-23
- Because he knew he was in the will of God he was on a solid ground of faith
- He rejected doubt and called what was yet not as though it already existed
- He wasn't distracted by other issues.
- He encouraged the people to get their eyes off the problem and on God, 4:13-14

6. Nehemiah delegated responsibility to others.
- He wasn't afraid to allow unskilled people to help.
- He divided the responsibilities into manageable parts.

- He followed up on those to whom he gave responsibility
- He wasn't discouraged by those who didn't want to join him, 3:5
- He put workers in strategic positions, according to their passion, 3:10
- He demanded excellence in workmanship and attitude
- He got families involved, 3:12

7. Nehemiah kept the momentum moving forward.
- He didn't let opposition slow him down.
- He didn't slow down as he reached the completion of building the wall.
- He didn't lose his passion as he and the people matured.
- He kept the fires of revival burning.
- He didn't tolerate sin.
Lessons From the Life of Nehemiah
Part 2: The Right Time

Nehemiah Waited for the Right Time
*Nehemiah 2:1-8*

1. Nehemiah prayed for *four months* before he asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem.

   **Waiting on God does this:**
   - Allows God to prepare the circumstances and the heart of the people involved in what He wants to do.
   - Allows the burden to increase in our heart.
   - Allows the vision and strategy to become clear in our mind.
   - Allows us to build a foundation of prayer.
   - Gives time for us to prepare ourselves, our supplies, our people.

   *During those four months Nehemiah prepared his plan and was ready to present his idea and all his reasons to the king. He has contacted people that could help him, researched his idea and prepared his reasons to present to the king. He has a specific goal and a time when he would finish his project.* (vs. 4-6)

2. There is a time and a season for everything. We want to wait for the right time.
   *Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

   **Our Responsibility is to Recognize God's Timing and Prepare Ourselves to Move According to His Timing:**
   - God has a plan and a time to fulfill that plan. We don't make God's plans, we recognize them and act.
   - God has a set time for nations, for our family, for our church, for our ministry, for our life – for everything He wants us to do. We must prepare ourselves for that time, wait and when the time arrives, act.

3. Joshua waited for the right time for *40 years.*
   *Deuteronomy 31:1-8*

4. Knowing and acting at the right time is essential for success.

   - Wrong action at the wrong time will cause us to fail.
   - Right action at the wrong time will cause people and the situation to oppose us.
   - Wrong action at the right time will cause us to fail.
   - Right action at the right time will bring success.
5. How do we know if it's the right time to do something?

*Esther 4:6-17*

- **What Are the Needs Around Us.** Consider the situation around you – what is needed? What does the church need? The nation? My family? The village? What is the spiritual season?
- **What Are the Opportunities?** Be alert to opportunities. Look for opportunities.
- **Ask People Whom Your Respect and Have Influence in Your Life.** Before you make an important decision, ask the people who have influence in your life about their ideas and feelings. Do they agree with you?
- **Evaluate Your Past Successes.** Your experiences from before will become wisdom to you. You can learn from your success and failures. You can compare this situation with similar situations before and possibly know the result.
- **Overcome Fear.** There is always a risk when you make a decision. Don't be afraid to take a risk and try if you have done all of the other things above.
Lessons from the Life of Nehemiah

Part 3: Communication

Nehemiah Communicated the Vision and Called the People to Respond

Nehemiah 2:17-18

1. Nehemiah communicated the vision – what to do and why we are going to do it.
   Verse 17: “Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach.”

   The Value of Vision:
   - Without a vision people live without a purpose. (Proverbs 29:18)
   - Our vision must be associated with God's vision.
   - Vision creates energy, strength and momentum.
   - Vision keeps us from getting off track and distracted.
   - Our vision must be clear and repeated many times in many different ways. (Habakkuk 2:1-2)
     - Find out what God is doing; write the vision; make it plain so those who read it and understand it can go forward; the vision will not be fulfilled all at one time, we must constantly encourage the people to continue working to fulfill the vision.

2. If people will follow you and your vision (God's vision), they must know you love them and you are credible.
   Nehemiah 2:18

   People Must Receive You Before They Will Receive Your Vision or Your God:
   - People must see that you care for them as a person and their welfare.
   - People must perceive you as credible. Credibility comes with success and good character.
   - People must see that you are committed to lead the mission to its successful conclusion and that you will not leave them when the vision is only part-way completed.

3. Nehemiah communicated clearly and in a way that his vision touched their hearts and moved them to join in his vision.

   What Do We Communicate?
   - Communicate where you are going repeatedly.
   - Communicate the strategy and plan on how you will arrive at your goal.
   - Communicate when you anticipate change to occur in your plan.
   - Communicate to your key leaders and members frequently.
   - Communicate your faith in the Almighty God who will help you fulfill the vision, even when you face obstacles.
   - Communicate when you change your plans.
Lessons From the Life of Nehemiah

Part 1: Passion

Nehemiah Received a Burden From the Lord and His Heart Burned For That Vision
Nehemiah 1:1-4

1. We must have a passion for what we do. We must believe that we have a mission from the Living God and we must believe that this mission is worth sacrificing for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Do We Create Passion?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Learn about a need. Read about a need in some place or in a person's life. Go look at that need and see it for yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Believe that you have a mission from God in this life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pray and ask God what He wants you to do about that need.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Make a plan and do something about that need.</td>
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_The key to persistence and overcoming obstacles is passion. People endure because they feel passionate about something. The key to passion is purpose, not aimlessness. Passion is birthed in a person's heart when he or she feels that he has a destiny and a purpose in this life._

2. We must pray and pray a lot.

<table>
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<th>Intercession Must Always Be the Primary Role of a Leader</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Prayer allows the burden and the need to enter into our heart and spirit.</td>
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<td>• Prayer allows us to receive a personal burden for that need.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prayer causes us to wait in God until we see clearly what He wants us to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prayer causes us to do something about that need.</td>
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3. We must decide what we are going to do about what we see or hear.

4. We must make a plan and believe that God is with us.

_People who make a difference in life are passionate about their mission from God. People who make a difference in life find out what God is passionate about and get involved in that._

_What are you passionate about?_
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Part 4: Overcoming Opposition

1. **Nehemiah Overcame Opposition**
   Chapter 2:19-20; 4:1-23
   - How did others oppose him?

   When you begin to move forward into God's will you can expect people to oppose you:
   - People will laugh at you, 2:19
   - People will make fun of you, 2:19
   - They will accuse you of doing wrong, 2:19
   - They will tell you that you will fail, 4:1-3
   - They will attack you, possibly physically and your reputation, 4:7-8
   - They will try to sabotage your plans, 4:7-8
   - They will try to cause you to be confused, 4:7-8
   - They will try to cause you to be afraid, 4:11
   - They will not give up but continue to oppose you, 4:12

2. **Jesus Told Us We Would Face Opposition**
   - Matthew 5:10-12
   - Matthew 5:44
   - Matthew 10:21-23
   - Matthew 10:28

3. **The Apostles Met With Opposition**
   - Acts 4:16-20
   - Acts 5:29
   - Acts 5:40-42
   - Acts 14:21-22

4. **Understand Where the Opposition Comes From**
   2 Timothy 2:22-26

5. **How Do We Respond to Opposition?**

   **Nehemiah's Example:**
   - Declare what the Word of God says about what you are doing, 2:20
   - Continue to do what you know God has called you to do, 2:20
   - Pray and ask God to let them receive the result of their actions, 4:4-5
   - Understand that when they oppose you, they oppose God. Ask God to defend His reputation, 4:5
   - Understand that sometimes people's faith fail because of persecution. We, as leaders, must encourage them, 4:11
• Put your strong leaders in strategic positions to encourage the others, 4:13 (Look for strong people who are not discouraged to stand with you)
• You, as the senior leader, stand up and address the problem publicly, expressing your faith in God, 4:14
• Remind the people of the vision and purpose for which they are suffering, 4:13
• Create a system of relationships to encourage one another and protect one another, 4:15-23

6. To Overcome Opposition We Must:

• Know we are in the will of God.
• Declare the promises of God with our mouth to convince our mind.
• Reject doubt and fear.
• Cry out to God to defend His work and reputation.
• Don't be distracted by threats or difficulties.
• Don't seek revenge but trust in God to fight for you.
• Continue to do what we know is the will of God.
• Find others who have strong faith and confidence to stand together with you.
• Encourage the church by our own faith and confidence in God.
• Make a strategic plan for the church to encourage one another by their faith.

HOW DOES OPPOSITION COME?

• From people who are opposed to our vision.
• From enemies of God.
• From friends and family.
• From difficulties we face in accomplishing the vision, such as human and financial resources.
• From thoughts the enemy put into our minds.
• From Christians who walk according to the flesh.
Charles McCaul has been married to Cynthia McCaul since 1974. They have four children. After serving as an assistant pastor at Valley Christian Center in Harrisburg, Oregon for 4 years and Eugene Christian Fellowship in Eugene, Oregon for 14 years they moved their family of 4 to Phnom Penh, Cambodia in 1995 where they assisted in laying the foundations and building up what is now the largest local church in Cambodia, New Life Fellowship, and serving on the Apostolic Team of New Life Fellowship of Churches in Cambodia. Chuck is an author of more than 25 book and booklets focusing on Christian Leadership, Local Church Issues, Personal Growth and Bible-Related Studies. Many of them have been written for the Cambodian Context and have been translated into the Cambodian Language. Charles is also director of the Cambodian Leadership Institute.

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