

## Re-Vision - Part 3 - Secret Surveillance

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Glenn Garvin

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### **BIG IDEA - Understand who and what you're up against. But God will prevail!**

#### scripture focus - Nehemiah 2:11-15 NLT

“So I arrived in Jerusalem. **Three days later, I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem.** We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding. After dark I went out through the **Valley Gate**, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the **Dung Gate** to inspect the broken walls and burned gates. Then I went to the **Fountain Gate** and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble. So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate.”

**Every great story has a big problem to solve. And every big problem needs a big plan.** What do you do if you have no idea how BIG the problem really is? You hear about these massive projects and think, “oh, I know how to fix that.” But until you lay eyes on it, do you really know what you're getting into?

**Let me tell you about a man named Ferdinand de Lesseps**

**([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand\\_de\\_Lesseps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_de_Lesseps)).**

**The man who decided to fulfill his dream of building the Panama Canal.**

**He had built the Suez Canal at 120 miles** connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, **and believed he was the guy to do the same in Panama which was only 51 miles and** connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean and divides North and South America.

**There were only a few details he underestimated: The Suez Canal is in Egypt - a rather flat desert, Panama is a dense jungle alive with venomous snakes, insects, and spiders.** Panamá has deep ravines and high peaks lifting from the jungle floor to thousands of feet. Egypt only required a sea-level canal. Panama would require a plan to LIFT the water and the ships because the continental divide between oceans is **361 feet above sea level**, and the hills are steep with solid rock.

## **Panamá Canal.**

Sam Chand, in his book, *Bigger faster leadership - lessons from the builders of the Panama Canal*, writes of the extraordinary history of building, then REBUILDING the Panama Canal.

**For centuries, explorers, kings, presidents, and business leaders tried to find a way to shorten the trip from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Crossing the narrow isthmus of Central America offered plenty of promises, but it proved to be a daunting challenge.**

Still, the hardships seemed worth the risks. Chand writes, **“the cost of taking a cargo ship through the canal was about \$500,000 compared to the \$3 million it cost to travel around the southern tip of South America and up the other side of the continent.”**

**The Project began in 1880, by a French engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps. Ferdinand was the lead in the Suez Canal Project.** Here's a picture of Ferdinands archenemy - the mosquito - **one of the smallest insects alive today.**

Approximately 22,000 employees, from laborers to directors, died of yellow fever and malaria.

**Years later by 1893, the French realized the futility of continuing this enormous project. Cost to the French: \$287 Million (1893 dollars) or \$6.8 Billion (2007 dollars). The failure of the project is sometimes referred to as the Panama Canal Scandal. Ferdinand and his son were arrested and sentenced to prison for fraud. A court overturned the sentence because of a statute of limitations.**

In May 1904 after the United States had brokered a deal with France paying them \$40 million (they asked for \$100 million) to try to salvage the equipment and pay for the little progress that had taken place. **Even then the mosquitos still took a lot of lives. 5,600 workers died during the American construction years.**

**A big problem like a canal through the jungles of Panamá took a really big plan, an expensive plan. It costs thousands of lives and millions of dollars.**

In 2016 the canal was widened so it could accommodate the largest ships and tankers in the world, commerce accelerated around the globe. The second expansion began in 2007 and was finished in the summer of 2016 so it could accommodate the largest ships and tankers in the world, commerce accelerated around the globe. **First canal, 34 years. Expansion, 9 years.**

The bigger the problem, the bigger the plan or let God lead and guide and get it done. **Maybe it's both? Human's plan, God directs their steps.**

**Q:** How do you normally handle big projects or problems? Are you a procrastinator? A charging Rhino? An ignorer? A fretter? Or a plodding planner?

**Q:** There are DREAMERS, there are DOERS and sometimes there are BOTH kinds of people. Which are you?

**Nehemiah only had to REBUILD a wall that was probably about 1.7 miles long and a little over 16ft thick. This included about 10 gates and at least 8 towers.**

**GOD**

**Observation 1** – First you've got to see who you are up against.

## **Nehemiah 2:9-10 NLT**

**“When I came to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, I delivered the king’s letters to them.** The king, I should add, had sent along army officers and horsemen to protect me. But when **Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of my arrival, they were very displeased that someone had come to help the people of Israel.”**

**Sanballat the Horonite, who were these guys and why were they not happy that someone was coming to the aid of the Israelites?**

They were the men left in charge over the city of Jerusalem and surround areas. They are both governors!

**Sanballat appears as a Samaritan governor and Tobiah, Governor of Ammon** and was wealthy with strong Judaeian connections.

**And both belonged to two different tribes of Israel, Sanballat from the tribe of Ephraim and Tobiah from the tribe of Gad.**

**These guys were all like COUSINS!**

But Jerusalem had tons of problems that neither of them bothered to work on. They just let the whole community go to waste!

As governors they:

1. They had somehow managed to stay in the Jerusalem area and climbed their way up to high positions.
2. They had cushy jobs and were paid well.
3. They were the LAW in town!
4. They believed they were the “true” Israel because they never left. These guys were the **leaders of the Samaritan faction.**

Nehemiah’s governorship effectively took away any authority these opponents had over the region of Judah and his efforts would also

strengthen the returning Jews and weaken their influence. **On purpose or not, they connivingly made it look like Nehemiah was a enemy threat to the Persian empire.**

**Observation 2** - You've got to see **what** you are up against.

### **Nehemiah 2:11-15 NLT**

"So I arrived in Jerusalem. **Three days later, I slipped out during the night, taking only a few others with me. I had not told anyone about the plans God had put in my heart for Jerusalem.** We took no pack animals with us except the donkey I was riding. After dark I went out through the **Valley Gate**, past the Jackal's Well, and over to the **Dung Gate** to inspect the broken walls and burned gates. Then I went to the **Fountain Gate** and to the King's Pool, but my donkey couldn't get through the rubble. So, though it was still dark, I went up the Kidron Valley instead, inspecting the wall before I turned back and entered again at the Valley Gate."

I like what one commentary wrote, "**there was no way he could share with the people in Jerusalem what God led him to accomplish without first doing some research and planning.**"

**This pre-trip, secret surveillance, and assessment, reminds me of Jesus words about counting the cost of following him as a disciple. Jesus used a "Builder's Illustration."**

### **Luke 14:28-30 NLT**

"But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, 'There's the person who started that building and couldn't afford to finish it!'"

**I have a good friend who does bids for huge electrical projects and has the cost of materials, labor, and timeline down really well. No one wants to start a project without knowing what it will cost - and**

wisdom tells me, it's not just about money. It's also time and availability to manage the project or get someone to do it for you.

Nehemiah may have had some kind of "open credit" line with Asaph, the King's manager of the forest. I don't know how else he could have estimated how much lumber he would need. **I am reminded that God ensured that all of this was paid for by the King of Babylon. Most projects require fundraising AND planning.**

**Observation 3** - You have to make people see the truth! **Where they are and where they could be.**

Once Nehemiah had a solid sense of what the project looked like and what it would take to rebuild the wall - **ONLY THEN** - did he tell the people what was going on.

#### **Nehemiah 2:17-20 NLT**

"But now I said to them, **"You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!"** Then I told them about **how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king.** They replied at once, **"Yes, let's rebuild the wall!"** So they began the good work. But when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they **scoffed contemptuously. "What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"** they asked. I replied, "The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. But you have no share, legal right, or historic claim in Jerusalem."

**Nehemiah had both HEARD about and had SEEN for himself the devastation that had taken place. And instead of blaming the former Governors or shaming the people who had returned and tried to rebuild their own homes and lives, he CHALLENGED them with undeniable truth – their own city was in shambles!**

Then he boldly put out the vision – **LET US REBUILD THE WALL ending this disgrace.**

**Compelling needs have always inspired bold action. ~ Sam Chand**

Then as any visionary would, he told the story, he told his story. “I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king.”

**The miracle stories of the past should set the tone of faith for the future!**

And with that the people replied, “YES, let’s rebuild the wall.”

**Us**

**Observation 4** - Not everyone will join, and some may openly oppose you and the plan.

This is the hard, sad part of leading a plan to solve a big problem. Not everyone will want to say yes. Some will say no and work against it.

And those opposed begin to work their plan as well.

**Now three influential men (Sanballat, Tobiah and now a man named Geshem) began to do everything they could to stop Nehemiah and the people from ever finishing the plan. They used every demoralizing technique they knew, beginning with ridicule.**

Nehemiah was ready for their first **verbal volley**. Confident in what God had already done, he knew God would see them through. “The God of heaven will help us succeed. **We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall!**”

**Nehemiah brought CLARITY —both in the eyes of Judah and his enemies. Their dependence was not to be on their abilities, human resources, or personal genius. Their hope was in the God of heaven!**

Next week we'll look at Nehemiah's plan and begin to see how it works and what it cost the people.

**Where are we going as church? What does God have for us, as a gathering of Christ followers on Candlewood, in the city of Lakewood?**

By the time the new year, 2023 rolls around I want to be able to share not just the pain of reality about our city and surrounding area, but also CLARITY of a plan that will take all of us to see it through.

The Lego bricks you were asked to sign are up and placed in a wall. The wall will be a reminder, an object lesson for us as we continue to **commit together to rebuild, restore and revision** for God and what He wants us to do in this city.

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## NOTES

### Panamá Canal

2013, **For centuries, explorers, kings, presidents, and business leaders tried to find a way to shorten the trip from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Crossing the narrow isthmus of Central America offered plenty of promises, but it proved to be a daunting challenge.** Still, the hardships seemed worth the risks. By that day in January [2013], the cost of taking a cargo ship through the canal was about \$500,000 compared to the \$3 million it cost to travel around the southern tip of South America and up the other side of the continent. For executives of shipping companies, success is defined clearly and simply: moving cargo economically and quickly from port to port—in this case, from a port on one ocean to a port on another.

**The Project began in 1880, by a French engineer, Ferdinand de Lesseps. Ferdinand was the lead in the Suez Canal Project.** His enemy, one of the smallest insects alive today - the mosquito! In fact, between 1881 and 1889 it was estimated that approximately 22,000 employees, from laborers to directors, died of yellow fever and malaria. By 1893, the French realized the futility of continuing this enormous project and began to search for a purchaser to finish the canal. But because their records were so poorly maintained, their total cost for the 24



years of work performed in Panama is reported only as an estimate. **Cost to the French: \$287 Million (1893 dollars) or \$6.8 Billion (2007 dollars).**

In May 1904 after the United States had brokered a deal with France paying them \$40 million (they asked for \$100 million) and the mosquito still took a lot of lives. 5,600 workers died during the American construction years.

What did it originally cost the United States to build it.

<https://www.whatitcosts.com/panama-canal-cost-build/> **\$639 Million (1914 dollars); \$14.3 Billion (2007 dollars).**

The canal was widened in 2016 so it could accommodate the largest ships and tankers in the world, commerce accelerated around the globe. The second expansion began in 2007 and was finished in the summer of 2016, a **\$5.25 billion effort to expand the canal**, enabling ships **more than two and a half times the size of the previous limit** to pass through the waterway.

**Q:** How many of you would love to be a Ferdinand and just take on impossible projects?

**Q:** How do you normally handle really big projects or problems? Are you a procrastinator? A charging Rhino? An ignorer? A fretter? Or a plodding planner?

**Q:** There are DREAMERS, there are DOERS and sometimes there are BOTH kinds of people. Which are you?

### Quotes:

**Compelling needs have always inspired bold action. ~ Sam Chand**

**Vision isn't born in a vacuum. A leader's vision is the result of being gripped by a palpable need. Who is being bypassed in our community? ~ Sam Chand**

**Observation 1** - You've got to see who you are up against.

**Nehemiah 2:9 - the trip, first the WHO!**

### Faithlife Study Bible

I came to the governors of The amount of time between the events of Neh 2:8 and 2:9 was long enough for Nehemiah to gather supplies and make the long journey from Susa to Jerusalem. **Nehemiah probably arrived in Jerusalem in the late summer of 444 bc. Ezra's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem took four months (Ezra 7:9). Even though it was farther, Nehemiah's journey may have taken less time.** Ezra's caravan included roughly 50,000 people—plus livestock and wagons heavily laden with gold and silver. Nehemiah's journey likely would have taken him from Susa to Babylon, then north up the Euphrates River, west to Damascus, and finally south to Samaria and Jerusalem. Jewish historian

Josephus writes that Nehemiah's journey took five years (Antiquities 11.5), which is highly improbable considering Nehemiah's apparent urgency in Neh 2:5–8.

2:10 **Sanballat the Horonite** In extrabiblical sources **Sanballat is identified as the governor of Samaria**. He is associated with Samaria in 4:1–2, but his title is never given in Nehemiah. Sanballat may have come from one of four possible areas: Hauran east of the Sea of Galilee; Horonaim in Moab (compare Jer 48:34); upper or lower Beth-Horon, two key cities located 12 miles northwest of Jerusalem (compare Josh 10:10; 16:3, 5); or Haran in northern Mesopotamia (Gen 12:4; 28:10). Beth-Horon is the most probable option. The region of upper and lower Beth-Horon is near the plain of Ono, where Nehemiah is later invited by Sanballat (Neh 6:2).

And the Ammonite servant Tobiah. Possibly the Persian governor of Ammon. The Ammonites were descendants of Ben-ammi, son of Abraham's nephew Lot. They settled in territory east of the Jordan River. See note on 1 Chr 19:1. Tobiah was married to the daughter of Shecaniah (Neh 6:18). His son, Jehohanan, was married to the daughter of Meshullam, who helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (3:4). The Tobiad family exercised considerable influence and authority over the region of Ammon for several generations during the Hellenistic period (beginning ca. late fourth century bc). The Tobiah named here may have been an ancestor of that family.

### Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible

Nehemiah 2:10 (JFB): Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite—The term used indicates him to have been a freed slave, elevated to some official dignity. These were district magistrates under the government of the satrap of Syria; and they seem to have been **leaders of the Samaritan faction**.

### The Lexham Bible Dictionary

#### Sanballat

In extra-biblical materials, **Sanballat appears as a Samaritan governor**, though Nehemiah never mentions Sanballat as a governor. The documents discovered in Elephantine mention “Delaiah and Shelemiah, sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria” (Cowley, Aramaic Papyri, 108–19, text 30, line 29). “Sanballat, governor of Samaria” is also mentioned in one of the documents discovered in the Wadi ed-Daliyeh (Cross, “Discovery of Samaria Papyri,” 111). In the book of Nehemiah, Sanballat is connected with Samaria only once—in Neh 4:1–3, **Sanballat mocks the rebuilding efforts in front of the Samaritan army. Although Nehemiah treated him as a foreigner, Sanballat likely belonged to the northern Israelite tribe of Ephraim**

### **Tobiah, Governor of Ammon**

Wealthy governor of Ammon with strong Judaeans connections; opposed Nehemiah's rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall during the fifth century bc.

Tobiah opposes the rebuilding project throughout the book of Nehemiah (Neh 2:10, 19; 3:15; 4:1; 6:1, 12, 14, 17, 19; 7:62; 13:4, 7, 8). He also appears once in Ezra (Ezra 2:60; also see 1 Esdras 5:37) and twice in Zechariah (Zech 6:10, 14). In the book of Nehemiah, **Tobiah is one of Nehemiah's archenemies**—"Tobiah the Ammonite servant." Mazar argues that "servant" (עבד, 'bd) functions as shorthand for "servant of the king"—a high-ranking Persian official (Mazar, "Tobiads," 236). Knoppers translates the term as "slave," arguing that Nehemiah refers to his opponents derogatorily (Knoppers, "Nehemiah and Sanballat," 325).

**Although Nehemiah seems to portray Tobiah as a foreigner, he most likely was an Israelite serving as the Persian-appointed governor of Ammon.** Mazar resists identifying Tobiah as a foreigner, noting that the Israelite tribe of Gad occupied the land of Ammon (Mazar, "Tobiads," 237–38). Knoppers supports this conclusion, observing that **Nehemiah does not accuse Tobiah of intermarriage.** In addition, the name "**Tobiah**" means "**Yahweh is good**" or "**My good is Yahweh**," and Tobiah names his son Jehochanan (יְהוֹחָנָן, yehochanan), meaning "Yahweh has been gracious" (Neh 6:18; Yamuchi, "Archeological Background," 301; Knoppers, "Nehemiah and Sanballat," 313).

**Tobiah conspires with Sanballat the Horonite and Geshem the Arab against Nehemiah.** They intimidate the builders (Neh 2:19–20); draw battle plans against Jerusalem (Neh 4:1–9); lay an ambush for Nehemiah (Neh 6:1–9); and hire Shemaiah to lure Nehemiah unlawfully into the temple (Neh 6:10–14).

The book of Nehemiah shows that Tobiah was well-connected in Judah. Tobiah and Judah's nobles write to each other, and the people of Judah inform Nehemiah of Tobiah's good deeds (Neh 6:17, 19). Tobiah also had family connections: His father-in-law was a returning exile from a numerous clan (Neh 3:29; 7:10; Ezra 2:5); his son married the daughter of a wall-builder who signed the covenant pledge (Neh 6:18; see also 3:4, 30; 10:7); he is related to Eliashib the priest, who allows him to live in a temple storeroom (Neh 13:4–5). Tobiah's relationship to Eliashib could be genetic or through marriage (Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, 116–117). Ezra 2:60 (see Neh 7:62) introduces Tobiah as a returning exile unable to confirm his Israelite lineage. Zechariah also lists Tobiah among returning exiles (Zech 6:10). In this account, Zechariah collects gold and silver from Tobiah and the returning exiles to make the high priest's crown. Tobiah and the returning exiles then care for the crown in the temple (Zech 6:14).

**Observation 2** - You've got to see **what** you are up against.

### The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Nehemiah 2:11–16 (BKC): 2:11–16. Nehemiah knew **there was no way he could share with the people in Jerusalem what God led him to accomplish without first doing some research and planning.** After taking time (three days), presumably to think, pray, and get acquainted with some people there, he took a few men into his confidence, men he could trust.

Then he **made a careful survey of the walls to analyze the problem he faced.** He did so at night, apparently to avoid letting others know his plans before they were firmly fixed in his mind. **During these night hours he gained perspective and, as outlined in chapter 3, developed an effective plan to accomplish the task he had come to Jerusalem to perform.**

**Observation 3** - You have to make people see the truth! Where they are and where they could be.

### The Bible Knowledge Commentary

#### His challenge to the people (2:17–20)

2:17–18. **After Nehemiah had completed his secret survey and was satisfied that he had developed a workable plan, the time had come to reveal to the Jews why he was in Jerusalem.** Them refers to the people mentioned in verse 16: “Jews [i.e., common people], priests ... nobles ... officials.” **First he challenged them to notice their deplorable circumstances, which had brought them trouble and disgrace (cf. 1:3). Then he challenged them to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and followed his challenge with a personal testimony as to how God's gracious hand (cf. 2:8) had granted him favor before King Artaxerxes.**

**When Nehemiah gave his challenge, the people's negative feelings became positive. Despair turned to hope. They responded and began the rebuilding process.**

**Observation 4** - Not everyone will join and some may openly oppose you and the plan.

**2:19–20.** Apparently word spread quickly regarding the Jews' response to Nehemiah's challenge. As soon as their enemies heard the news they stepped up their efforts to hinder the process. **They used every demoralizing technique**

**they knew, beginning with ridicule** (bûz means “**to despise or regard with contempt**”) and the suggestion that they were rebels. Joining Sanballat and Tobiah (cf. v. 10) was Geshem (cf. 6:1–2, 6) the Arab.

But Nehemiah was ready for their insidious attack. He affirmed that the God of heaven (cf. 1:4–5; 2:4) would enable them to succeed. The Jews, God's servants, would rebuild, but the three opponents had no share or claim (present) or historic right (past) to the city.

Once again Nehemiah brought the task—both in the eyes of Judah and his enemies—into clear focus. Their dependence was not to be on their abilities, human resources, or personal genius. Their hope was in the God of heaven!

Nehemiah exhibited many characteristics necessary for effective leadership. **Donald K. Campbell lists 21 such factors (Nehemiah: Man in Charge, p. 23):**

- 1. He established a reasonable and attainable goal.**
- 2. He had a sense of mission.**
- 3. He was willing to get involved.**
- 4. He rearranged his priorities in order to accomplish his goal.**
  
- 5. He patiently waited for God's timing.**
- 6. He showed respect to his superior.**
- 7. He prayed at crucial times.**
- 8. He made his request with fact and graciousness.**
- 9. He was well prepared and thought of his needs in advance.**
- 10. He went through proper channels.**
  
- 11. He took time (three days) to rest, pray, and plan.**
- 12. He investigated the situation firsthand.**
- 13. He informed others only after he knew the size of the problem.**
- 14. He identified himself as one with the people.**
- 15. He set before them a reasonable and attainable goal.**
- 16. He assured them God was in the project.**
  
- 17. He displayed self-confidence in facing obstacles.**
- 18. He displayed God's confidence in facing obstacles.**
- 19. He did not argue with opponents.**
- 20. He was not discouraged by opposition.**
- 21. He courageously used the authority of his position**

## **Scriptures**

**Nehemiah 2:9-10 NLT**

**“When I came to the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, I delivered the king’s letters to them.** The king, I should add, had sent along army officers and horsemen to protect me. But when **Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of my arrival, they were very displeased that someone had come to help the people of Israel.**”

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“But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’”

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## **Questions**

**Q:** How many of you would love to be a Ferdinand and just take on impossible projects?

**Q:** How do you normally handle really big projects or problems? Are you a procrastinator? A charging Rhino? An ignorer? A fretter? Or a plodding planner?

**Q:** There are DREAMERS, there are DOERS and sometimes there are BOTH kinds of people. Which are you?

- Q:** Why do you think Nehemiah went out at night to survey the situation?
- Q:** Why do think Nehemiah said, “let’s end this disgrace” when challenging the people to see the truth about themselves and their city?
- Q:** Why was Nehemiah confident in the face of open, vocal critics?

## LINKS

<http://www.biblicalarchaeologytruth.com/nehemiahs-wall.html>

Wall Graphic - <http://www.idolphin.org/daniel/neh01.html> -

Great article- <https://medium.com/@chrisvonada/the-courage-and-calling-of-nehemiah-1b64df490373>

Interesting article on Nehemiah-

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/people-in-the-bible/nehemiah-the-man-behind-the-wall/>

## Review from Chapter One

1. see reality,
2. grieve the loss,
3. do something about it
4. recognize our part of the problem.
5. And together, in the months ahead, asking for God’s help and favor.

## Review from Chapter Two – first half

1. God is at work
2. Use the time to prepare
3. Let godly character and wisdom guide us
4. Take ownership - **Our city, Our people**
5. Be ready with plan