

Re-Vision - The plan is People

September 25, 2022

Glenn Garvin

BIG IDEA - Big problems, big plans and big people.

scripture focus - Nehemiah 3:1 NLT “Then Eliashib the high priest and the other priests started to rebuild at the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, building the wall as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and the Tower of Hananel.”

Great stories have big problems. Big problems require big plans. However, big plans need BIG PEOPLE to work the plan. All the best moments of conflict, battles, and tension required men and women of big faith to **work** hard and **believe** in a BIG God. Is your faith big enough? Is our God big enough? A few may not be willing to risk finding out. Big people of big faith have always led a Spirit inspired and enabled movement of God in our human history. Who chooses to go first?

To most people Nehemiah chapter three doesn't look like a sermon, it looks like a list of tasks and people working together on a huge project. And, that is true.

But here's what I see. I see that the people ARE the sermon, the people are the plan. Big problems need big plans and big people!

There's a familiar story about what happens the first time you are handed something with your name in it.

In the old days, it was a phone book. And in this book there was a section called the the white pages - because the pages were on white paper.

Phone companies used to drop it off, on your front porch every year whether you wanted it or not, whether you used it or not.

The printed book that included the white pages had a list of people in your neighborhood inside. **It had their names, addresses and phone numbers, just in case you want to drop them a note or call them up and say hello, I guess.** You had to PAY the phone company to be unlisted!!!

And the thick book of thin pages was paid for by the other section of this book which gave it the title of this massive print production and free delivery project. **The book was called the Yellow Pages** and this was like the early days of Google.

When people first started receiving them, they...Look up their name.

- **We used to do church photo directories**, with the classic forced smiles of family pictures. When you got it, you looked up your name.
- **Graduation handouts**, passed out as you come into the stadium or auditorium, you look for your kid's name.
- **Awards programs, donor plaques, dedication ceremonies, even plays and movie credits - there's my name, in print, in lights or scrolling up the screen.**

Names are what Nehemiah chapter three is all about.

I counted the names mentioned in chapter three.

Nehemiah lists a lot of names. Names, in and of themselves are important, they have meaning. Names were important to the Israelites because they carried the story of God from one generation to another! Names and people from certain cities had reputations.

Most of the names written were representing hard working, "loyal-to-their-roots" kind of people. Some of these names were names from

men with high positions and authority in the city and surrounding areas.

Observation 1 – Leaders go first.

Nehemiah 3:1 NLT “Then **Eliashib** the high priest and the other priests started to rebuild at the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, building the wall as far as the **Tower of the Hundred**, which they dedicated, and the **Tower of Hananel**.”

Eliashib goes first! Leaders always go first.

Who is Eliashib (means: whom God will restore) and why did he go first?

In the Old Testament, the **primary purpose of the high priest was to serve as a representative and mediator between the people and God. He was the Spiritual Director for the people.** He tended to the temple and managed all the comings and goings of the people when they gathered for special events, **public animal sacrifices representing a temporary, substitutionary payment for sin.** The office was usually passed down from father to son because God had told them, it was only one male from one group of people who could serve in this position. They were called Levites. It was an honored position, but had been neglected when the temple was destroyed.

So why did he go first? Was it his job or his God given calling?

Priests sometimes led Israel, even into battle, **Numbers 31:3-6 NLT** “**Then Moses sent them out, 1,000 men from each tribe, and Phinehas (feen-e-ous) son of Eleazar (L-e-a-zer) the priest led them into battle. They carried along the holy objects of the sanctuary and the trumpets for sounding the charge.**”

In his book, **Leaders Eat Last**, **Simon Sinek** writes, “When you are with Marines gathering to eat, you will notice that **the most junior are served first and the most senior are served last.** When you witness this act, you will also note that **no order is given. Marines just do it.** At the

heart of this very simple action is the Marine Corps' approach to leadership. **Marine leaders are expected to eat last because the true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own."**

Observation 2 – People really matter to God, they should matter to us.

Like I said, Nehemiah mentions A LOT of names, individual names, family names and groups of people from cities.

Names outnumber the project 2 to 1 – 42 verses 71!

- Wall mentioned 23 times
- Gate mentioned 13 times
- Tower mentioned 6 times

Names directly working on the project - 38

Father, grandfather or family names written - 35

Cities, areas or groups who sent workers - 11

The Gates - 10 mentioned

The Towers - 4 mentioned

I'm not going to read all of **Nehemiah 3:2-32**, because it **reads like a project report for a stockholder's meeting!**

He writes about the leaders. They are NOT prioritized above the others, but he scatters them in the text. Even as he writes about them, you get a sense that all though they were officials, they worked hand in hand with everyone else.

There were men who were kind of like Mayors at that time:

One: leader of half the district of Jerusalem. Another, leader of the other half of the district of Jerusalem.

Others may have been like County Supervisors:

One: leader of half the district of Beth-zur. The leader of the other half of Beth-zur not mentioned.

Another: leader of the other half of the district of Keilah. The other, leader of the other half of the district of Keilah.

Nehemiah also writes in the...

Men who were craftsman and small business owners:

- A couple of goldsmiths and merchants
- **Even a perfumer**

Then Nehemiah has comments after some of the people who were committed, like footnotes, reminding everyone to remember what it took, cost or sacrificed to be in unified in rebuilding the wall.

Some individuals and groups are noted for extraordinary work and progress:

- He notes the **men of Tekoa**, and comments, **“though their leaders refused to work with the construction supervisors.”**
- The **people from Zanoah**, led by Hanun repaired 1,500 feet of wall. **That’s a lot of stone stacking!**
- One, Baruch son of Zabbai, who zealously **repaired an additional section** for the high priest’s house. Baruch must have stood out as someone who hustled and worked hard.
- **Nehemiah even gives shout outs to the ladies:** Shallum son of Hallohesh and his daughters **repaired the next section.**

Observation 3 – A commitment from all, no matter how large or how small, will eventually build the wall strong and tall.

There are quite a few references to **folks committing to the rebuild right by their home, “repairing the section immediately across from his own house” or “across from where they lived.”**

They just got involved right where they live!

Maclaren’s Exposition Commentary wrote,

'Every man over against his house' is the principle I desire to commend to you as going a long way to solve the problem of how to sweeten the foul life of our modern cities.

His quote continues in my notes, but basically he says, "People may say, 'what can I do,' or 'somebody should do something,' 'the government, or businesses should do something.'" Nehemiah said, "let's rebuild the wall," and men and women did what they could even repairing sections right by their house.

I remind you, the problems we face in our country in our culture are big – really big. But God is faithful! I believe it will take a big plan that requires rebuilding our lives and our families. And finally, I believe it will require BIG people of faith to believe that God will go before us!

I do not believe politics or politicians will save us. I do not believe that government or education has any interest in helping us. I believe that each man and woman, the young and old, the single, married or widowed can make a decision do what they can for as long as they can and trust God to make up the difference!

I believe the hearts and minds of this generation will turn to God and want to come home, but as a church we must be ready to receive them like the father who runs towards his prodigal son.

NOTES

Nehemiah 3:2-32 NLT - the gates and wall, oh my!

"People from the town of Jericho worked next to them, and beyond them was Zaccur son of Imri."

The Fish Gate was built by the sons of Hassenah. They laid the beams, set up its doors, and installed its bolts and bars.

Meremoth son of Uriah and grandson of Hakkoz repaired the **next section of wall**. Beside him were Meshullam son of Berekiah and grandson of Meshezabel, and then Zadok son of Baana. Next were the people from Tekoa, though their leaders refused to work with the construction supervisors.

The **Old City Gate** was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid the beams, set up its doors, and installed its bolts and bars. Next to them were Melatiah from Gibeon, Jadon from Meroth, people from Gibeon, and people from Mizpah, the headquarters of the governor of the province west of the Euphrates River. Next was Uzziel son of Harhaiah, a goldsmith by trade, who also **worked on the wall**. Beyond him was Hananiah, a manufacturer of perfumes. They left out a section of Jerusalem as they **built the Broad Wall**. Rephaiah son of Hur, the leader of half the district of Jerusalem, was next to them **on the wall**. Next Jedaiah son of Harumaph **repaired the wall across from his own house**, and next to him was Hattush son of Hashabneiah.

Then came Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-moab, who **repaired another section of the wall** and the **Tower of the Ovens**. Shallum son of Hallohesh and his daughters **repaired the next section**. He was the leader of the other half of the district of Jerusalem.

The **Valley Gate** was repaired by the people from Zanoah, led by Hanun. They set up its doors and installed its bolts and bars. They also **repaired the 1,500 feet of wall** to the **Dung Gate**.

The **Dung Gate** was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, the leader of the Beth-hakkerem district. He rebuilt it, set up its doors, and installed its bolts and bars.

The **Fountain Gate** was repaired by Shallum son of Col-hozeh, the leader of the Mizpah district. He rebuilt it, roofed it, set up its doors, and installed its bolts and bars. Then he **repaired the wall of the pool of Siloam** near the king's garden, and he **rebuilt the wall as far as the stairs** that descend from the City of David. Next to him was Nehemiah son of Azbuk, the leader of half the district of Beth-zur. He **rebuilt the wall from a place across from the tombs of David's family** as far as the water reservoir and the House of the Warriors. Next to him, repairs were made by a group of Levites working under the supervision of Rehum son of Bani. Then came Hashabiah, the leader of half the district of Keilah, who supervised the **building of the wall on behalf of his own district**. Next down the line were his countrymen led by Binnui son of Henadad, the leader of the other half of the district of Keilah. Next to them, Ezer son of Jeshua, the leader of Mizpah, **repaired another section of wall across from the ascent to the armory** near the angle in the wall. Next to him was Baruch son of Zabbai, who zealously **repaired an additional section from the angle to the door of the house of Eliashib** the high

priest. **Meremoth** son of **Uriah** and grandson of **Hakkoz** **rebuilt another section of the wall extending from the door of Eliashib's house to the end of the house**. The next repairs were made by the priests from the surrounding region. After them, **Benjamin** and **Hasshub** **repaired the section across from their house**, and **Azariah** son of **Maaseiah** and grandson of **Ananiah** **repaired the section across from his house**. Next was **Binnui** son of **Henadad**, who **rebuilt another section of the wall from Azariah's house to the angle and the corner**.

Palal son of **Uzai** carried on the work from a point opposite the angle and **the tower that projects up from the king's upper house beside the court of the guard**. Next to him were **Pedaiah** son of **Parosh**, with the Temple servants living on the hill of Ophel, who **repaired the wall as far as a point across from the Water Gate to the east and the projecting tower**. Then came the people of **Tekoa**, who **repaired another section across from the great projecting tower and over to the wall of Ophel**. Above **the Horse Gate**, the **priests** repaired the wall. Each one repaired the section immediately across from his own house. Next **Zadok** son of **Immer** also **rebuilt the wall across from his own house**, and beyond him was **Shemaiah** son of **Shecaniah**, the gatekeeper of the **East Gate**. Next **Hananiah** son of **Shelemiah** and **Hanun**, the sixth son of **Zalaph**, **repaired another section**, while **Meshullam** son of **Berekiah** **rebuilt the wall across from where he lived**. **Malkijah**, one of the goldsmiths, **repaired the wall as far as the housing for the Temple servants and merchants**, across from the **Inspection Gate**. Then he continued as far as the upper room at the corner. The other **goldsmiths and merchants** **repaired the wall from that corner to the Sheep Gate**."

Names directly working on the project - 38 men

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. Eliashib | 14. Hattush | 27. Meremoth |
| 2. Zaccur | 15. Malkijah | 28. Benjamin |
| 3. Meremoth | 16. Hasshub | 29. Hasshub |
| 4. Meshullam | 17. Shallum | 30. Azariah |
| 5. Zadok | 18. Hanun | 31. Palal |
| 6. Joiada | 19. Malkijah | 32. Pedaiah |
| 7. Meshullam | 20. Shallum | 33. Zadok |
| 8. Melatiah | 21. Nehemiah | 34. Shemaiah |
| 9. Jadon | 22. Rehum | 35. Hananiah |
| 10. Uzziel | 23. Hashabiah | 36. Hanun |
| 11. Hananiah | 24. Binnui (2x) | 37. Meshullam |
| 12. Rephaiah | 25. Ezer | 38. Malkijah |
| 13. Jedaiah | 26. Baruch | |

Father, grandfather or family names written - 35

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| 1. Imri | 3. Uriah | 5. Berekiah |
| 2. Hassenah | 4. Hakkoz | 6. Meshezabel |

7. Baana	17. Recab	27. Ananiah
8. Paseah	18. Col-hozeh	28. Henadad
9. Besodeiah	19. Azbuk	29. Uzai
10. Harhaiah	20. Bani	30. Parosh
11. Hur	21. Henadad	31. Immer
12. Harumaph	22. Jeshua	32. Shecaniah
13. Hashabneiah	23. Zabbai	33. Shelemiah
14. Harim	24. Uriah	34. Zalaph
15. Pahath	25. Hakkoz	35. Berekiah
16. Hallohesh	26. Maaseiah	

Cities, areas or groups who sent workers - 11

1. Jericho	5. Mizpah (3x)	9. Levites
2. Tekoa (2x)	6. Zanoah	10. Keilah (2x)
3. Gibeon (2x)	7. Beth-hakkerem	11. priests
4. Meronoth	8. Beth-zur	

Here's some of the unique notes Nehemiah made:

- Next were the people from **Tekoa**, though their leaders refused to work with the construction supervisors.
- Next was **Uzziel** son of **Harhaiah**, a goldsmith by trade, who also **worked on the wall**.
- Beyond him was **Hananiah**, a manufacturer of perfumes.
- **Rephaiah** son of **Hur**, the leader of half the district of Jerusalem
- **Shallum** son of **Hallohesh** and his daughters **repaired the next section**. He was the leader of the other half of the district of Jerusalem.
- **The Valley Gate** was repaired by the people from **Zanoah**, led by **Hanun**. They set up its doors and installed its bolts and bars. They also **repaired the 1,500 feet of wall** to the **Dung Gate**.
- **Nehemiah** son of **Azbuk**, the leader of half the district of **Beth-zur**
- **Hashabiah**, the leader of half the district of **Keilah**, who supervised the **building of the wall on behalf of his own district**.
- Next down the line were his countrymen led by **Binnui** son of **Henadad**, the leader of the other half of the district of **Keilah**.
- **Baruch** son of **Zabbai**, who zealously **repaired an additional section from the angle to the door of the house of Eliashib** the high priest.
- **Each one repaired the section immediately across from his own house** or **“across from where he lived.”**
- **Malkijah**, one of the goldsmiths, **repaired the wall as far as the housing for the Temple servants and merchants**, across from the **Inspection Gate**. Then he continued as far as the upper room at the corner.
- The other **goldsmiths and merchants repaired the wall from that corner to the Sheep Gate.**

Scriptures

Nehemiah 3:1 NLT "Then Eliashib the high priest and the other priests started to rebuild at the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set up its doors, building the wall as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and the Tower of Hananel."

Questions

Q: With seventy names written into the success story of Jerusalem's Wall, what do you think Nehemiah was communicating?

Q: How do you feel about names being listed, was it for posterity or for popularity?

Q: What is God calling me to that seems daunting?

Q: Is there large scale task that is not on your list, yet you feel the tug of the Holy Spirit to respond?

Q: Any thoughts on those who worked on the wall just outside their home? What do you get from that?

COMMENTARY REFERENCES

The Lexham Bible Dictionary

High Priests in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the primary purpose of the high priest was to serve as a representative and mediator between the people and Yahweh. The office was established with Aaron, the brother of Moses, and high priests were the head priest first at the tabernacle and then later at the temple. Zadok served as high priest in the temple during the reign of Solomon.

The high priest served several purposes that were crucial to Israelite worship. It was the high priest's responsibility to see that the covenant was enforced, and to direct people to complete the duties of the temple and the law of Moses. As the representative for the nation of Israel, the high priest had a tremendous responsibility to direct the hearts of the people toward God and the fulfillment of the covenant. Some of the primary responsibilities of the high priest were the regular handling of sacrifices and offerings, the blessing of people, and the annual entrance into the most holy place within the tabernacle/temple during the Day of Atonement. Many of the duties, actions, and even the unique style of dress that was required of the high priest were symbolic.

The office and responsibilities of the high priest were often familial (Lev 16:32; Exod 29:29). Generally, the office of high priest was assumed by the son of the

current high priest when he was either no longer able to fulfill his duties, or upon his death. The primary way in which a high priest was evaluated in Scripture was in terms of their love for and loyalty to Yahweh and the zeal with which they held to the observation of the covenant.

Throughout the Old Testament, there is a foreshadowing and forward-reaching hope of a more perfect high priesthood that can represent Yahweh effectively and be a sufficient mediator for the people of Israel. The cyclical pattern of the lives of good and poor high priests makes it clear that no human being can fully perform this responsibility.

Maclaren's Exposition Commentary

'Every man over against his house' is the principle I desire to commend to you as going a long way to solve the problem of how to sweeten the foul life of our modern cities.

When a great scandal and danger like this of the condition of the lower layers of our civic population is presented before men, for one man that says, 'What can I do?' there are twenty who say, 'Somebody should do something. Government should do something. The Corporation should do something. This, that, or the other aggregate of men should do something.'

So, dear friends! do not think that any organization, any corporate activity, any substitution of vicarious service, will solve the problem. It will not. There is only one way of doing it, the old way that we must tread if we are going to do anything for God and our fellows: 'The priests repaired every one over against his house.'

REFERENCES

From Patty Nicholas-Boyte - <https://thecove.org/blog/tuesday-devotions-a-study-in-nehemiah-6/>

What can we learn from Nehemiah?

- People responded from far and wide to Nehemiah's call for help.
- No matter what our "normal" job is, there is always something we can do to help.
- Even if our name is not listed, and we don't get the recognition for the work. God knows.
- The task may seem daunting, and the odds stacked against us, but when God calls us to a task, He will make a way.
- God goes before us. We are not alone.

Even with all of the planning and prayer Nehemiah put into the project, when it came to rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem, Nehemiah needed help. The harvest Jesus spoke of in Matthew 9 35-38 is the same. The harvest is great, the fields are ripe but the workers are few.

¹Biblical Significance of Tekoa

Tekoa appears in the biblical record in several places, but it is best known as the **birthplace of Amos, a shepherd and prophet** who primarily ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel (especially Samaria and Bethel) beginning around 750 bc. The name is typically understood as “the place for pitching tents” (Heicksen, “Tekoa,” 81; Raheb, Bethlehem, 67). Three additional mentions of Tekoa include:

1. One of David's mighty men was from Tekoa: Ira son of Ikkesh, who commanded 24,000 men (2 Sam 23:26; 1 Chr 27:9).
2. Joab secured a “wise woman” from Tekoa to serve as mediator between David and Absalom following Absalom's murder of Amnon (compare Raheb, Bethlehem, 67).
3. Second Chronicles 11:5–12 lists Tekoa as one of the cities Rehoboam fortified (compare Heicksen, “Tekoa,” 82; Keel, Orte, 733).

Nehemiah 3:5–27 records that after the exile, **residents of Tekoa assisted with the reconstruction of the city wall of Jerusalem**. The text further records that their highest-ranking workmen resisted the leadership of the Jerusalem construction supervisors.

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

Review from Chapter two – second half

1. You've got to see who you are up against
2. You've got to see what you are up against
3. You have to **make people see the truth!** Where they are and where they could be.
4. **Not everyone will join** and some may openly oppose you and the plan.