

Vision's Requirement

Read Nehemiah 2:10-20

Andy Stanley, in his book Visioneering, said, "Dreamers dream about things being different. Visionaries envision themselves making a difference." I love that! As we progress through our study in Nehemiah, we will see this man was more than just a dreamer. He was a man of action. He was burdened by God with a vision, and he made things happen. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (KJV) The NIV puts it this way: "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint." In other words, without a long-term executable plan—without a vision—people are doomed to wander aimlessly.

I have found in my life that, while visions are comprised in my dreams, dreams are not visions. Dreams are nice; visions are work. Visions take careful planning and execution. In life you will find leaders with vision and no ability to implement. They label themselves as "big idea" people and "visionaries," but they never have an executable plan. As a result, people just become frustrated with repeated pleas to embrace a vision which they view as unrealistic. Other times, you find hard workers who immerse themselves in all sorts of activity but without any strategic vision. This leads to an abundance of sincere effort, yet they are working aimlessly. Joel A. Barker said it well: "Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world."

Nehemiah changed the world and prepared the way for the King of Kings, Jesus, to Jerusalem. This is the storyline of the Bible. The reason that God has Nehemiah work on Jerusalem to rebuild the walls, the gates, the city, the temple and the worship is because the King of Kings needs to get to Jerusalem to fulfill the plan that God has for his people. It all started with a passionate desire to return to his people and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Don't ever let the enemy discount the vision God gives you, as your vision has tremendous ripple effect into the future.

Nehemiah was given a God-vision, and he was ready to implement a plan of action. Nehemiah shows great faith, courage and wisdom in how he approached the situation in Jerusalem. We can learn many principles of good leadership in how Nehemiah proceeded that we can use when faced with building or rebuilding the spiritual walls in our life, our home, our neighborhood, our schools and our city.

Reflect on the following questions:

1. Read **Nehemiah 2:11-16**. Nehemiah had been sent and supplied by King Artaxerxes with all the means to make his vision a reality. He arrived in Jerusalem after a difficult three-month journey. That was quite a success in itself, and now he needed to begin the task as quickly as possible. Yet, we see Nehemiah do something very interesting. He waits. He doesn't jump into action immediately. He doesn't even make a big announcement about his arrival. Instead, Nehemiah proceeds to investigate for himself (document reality) the state of Jerusalem.

What is your initial reaction to this approach? Why do you think Nehemiah went at night and told no one of his plans? What do you learn from him about planning and preparedness? (see Luke 14:28-33 and Proverbs 16:3) Why is it so important to not get

ahead of the Lord, but to wait for His perfect timing? Why is it wise to have a small circle of people to pray with and speak to about personal matters? Has there ever been a time when you have focused on right belief at the expense of right actions? Why is it important that we deal with real problems as the people of God?

2. Read **Nehemiah 2:17-18**. Tell us how Nehemiah rallied others to his cause. Although Nehemiah has never been to Jerusalem, he identifies with the plight of the people by using the first-person plural pronouns "we and us." In our individualistic society, we often try to go at it alone. But Christianity is a community endeavor. What community connection do you currently have? How can you invite others to join you in going deeper?

How do you think the people felt when Nehemiah told them the raw truth of their condition? What are some leadership experiences in your past in which this "we, us" leadership model was used? How has it made you feel?

In verse 18, he tells the people "of the gracious hand of God upon him" (the same expression used in verse 8 of chapter 2). This can be a polarizing approach. What has been your experience with this approach?

3. In **Nehemiah 2:19-20**, we see the opposition begin to assemble and start heckling and mocking. What is the significance of Nehemiah's enemies laughing at him when he began to do the work of the Lord, and why is it so important to have the perspective laid out in verse 20? (see Psalm 2:12, Psalm 74:22, Galatians 6:7) Why is it important to determine what God's perspective is on a situation? Why is it critical that we listen to what God says rather than what those who oppose us might say? Share some personal stories on how you have dealt with opposition both positively and negatively.

Personal Encouragement

What parts of your life do you feel are in need of renewal? Do you have a vision from God on how to tackle the project? Do you feel overwhelmed as you examine the rubble around you? Furthermore, are you facing opposition? I want to encourage you that God can use you powerfully to rebuild what is broken down in your life. Although the task may seem overwhelming and daunting and the walls seem burned and destroyed, with a God-given vision you can rebuild. God is still in the business of redeeming and restoring what the enemy has burned down. Do not be discouraged; place yourself in the mighty hand of God and He will not let you down. The gracious hand of God is with you; therefore, "arise and build." Begin the "good work" today. Make a decision today to stand. God stands with you. I stand with you. Journey stands with you!

"Expect great things for God. Attempt great things for God." (William Carey)