

A Cupbearer to the King: Learning project management from Nehemiah



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The Book of Nehemiah

When did the activity in this book take place?

According to the traditional view, Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the 7th year of King Artaxerxes which would be 458 BC. Nehemiah arrived the 20th year in of his reign. That would be 445 BC.

Where did events in this book happen?

The story of Nehemiah begins in Susa, the royal city of the Persian Empire. Nehemiah is the cupbearer to the king; a very high position. He travels to Jerusalem to re-build the walls of the city. Most of the events take place in and around the city of Jerusalem.

When and how was the book written?

This is a memoir of Nehemiah, so the original composition took place in about 440 BC. This book of *Nehemiah* is sometimes considered the second part of the book of *Ezra*. *Nehemiah* is also closely related to *I and II Chronicles*. It is possible that all four of these books were written or edited by the same hand.

Why is *Nehemiah* a part of our Bible?

With *Nehemiah*, history in the Old Testament comes to a close. The Babylonian captivity is ended and the children of Israel are returning to the promised land. Israel would soon fall into Greek hands, then into Roman hands. In the fullness of time – about 450 years after Nehemiah -- Christ would be born in Israel. The history of the Israelites would not be complete without an explanation of how the Jews returned home after their exile.

How can *Nehemiah* serve as a template for building your life and building your church?

The theme of Nehemiah is simple and straight forward: **“This is how I rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem”**. If we carefully follow in the steps of Nehemiah, we can learn how to build things in our own lives.

The Twelve Steps Suggested in the Book of Nehemiah

- 1. Identify the problem**
- 2. Prepare yourself spiritually**
- 3. Prepare a plan in writing**
- 4. Make a personal assessment**
- 5. Motivate others to assist**
- 6. Organize the work**
- 7. Remove rubbish**
- 8. Keep a single-minded focus**
- 9. Give God the thanks**
- 10. Make a Covenant**
- 11. Dedicate your work**
- 12. Never cease your quality control**

Each of the 12 steps has five parts:

Part I - Read – Please read carefully this portion of Nehemiah. Sometimes the reading is long, and you are asked to focus on or **Study** a specific portion of the reading.

Part II – Answer Questions – After reading and studying scripture, answer these questions for a deeper understanding of this portion of scripture. Develop your own questions about these verses.

Part III – Apply to your Life – What does Nehemiah teach you about your own situation? How can you apply this reading to your own life?

Part IV – Investigate Supporting Scripture – Look at the whole counsel of scripture. What do other books of the Bible say about this topic? Perhaps you know of another portion of scripture that addresses the topic. Share this with us.

Part V – Complete Homework Assignment – If time permits, do this work after class. You will be following in the steps of Nehemiah. Again, if time permits, discuss your homework assignment on the following day.

Step One ~ Identify the problem ~

Nehemiah 1: 1-3
see also *II Chronicles 36:17-20*

- **Read** Chapter 1 of Nehemiah
- **Study** Nehemiah 1:1-3.

¹The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ² Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. ³ They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

Read II Chronicles 36: 17-20 for further background on the problem.

¹⁷ He (God) brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. ²⁰ He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.

- **Answer these questions about the problem:**
 1. What was the state of the people of Jerusalem?
 2. What was the state of the walls of Jerusalem?
 3. Who destroyed the city? He was a king of what kingdom?
 4. Who was king that Nehemiah served? He was a king of what kingdom?
 5. About how many years passed between the time the city was destroyed, until the time that repairs were started?

- **Apply to your life:**

1. Do you have a clear understanding of the problem in your church work?
What exactly is your problem?
2. Are you describing symptoms of the problem or the true problem?
3. Is your problem mostly a resource problem (like repairing a broken wall) or is it a relationship problem (like repairing a broken marriage)?

Note: A problem is not critical unless it impacts the lives of people. Nehemiah's problem appears to be a resource problem that can be addressed by providing physical assistance. Some problems are not solved by resources, but by healing relationships between people, and between people and God.

- **What do these scriptures tell you about understanding problems?**

I Kings 4:29

Job 12:12-13

Job 28:28

Proverbs 1-1-6

Proverbs 24: 3

Proverbs 28:2

Ephesians 1:7-8

- **Homework Assignment:**

Identify in only a few sentences the nature of your problem.

~Step Two ~
Prepare yourself Spiritually
Nehemiah 1: 4-11

- **Read** Nehemiah 1:4-11
- **Study** the following verse:

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Note the order of response:

1. **Sitting**
2. **Weeping**
3. **Mourning**
4. **Fasting**
5. **Praying**

Memorize these five responses and consider what you can learn from this sequence of five events as a response to a tragic situation.

Sitting before God

- **Do not act impulsively.**
- **Before any important action sit and think before you act.**
- **What do these scriptures teach you about “waiting on the Lord”?**

Psalm 25:21

Psalm 27:14

Psalm 37:7-9

Isaiah 40:31

Job 2: 12-13

Weeping before God

- **What is the situation like in your home country?**
- **Should you weep at the spiritual conditions?**
- **What do these scriptures teach you about weeping?**

Psalm 30:4-5

Psalm 126:5-6

Jeremiah 31:15-16

Lamentations 1:16

John 16:20

Mourning what is lost

- **Are you truly concerned about your brothers and sisters in your country?**
- **Mourning refers to “grief over a loss”. What has been lost in your situation?**
- **What do these scriptures teach you about mourning?**

Job 2:11

Proverbs 29:2

Matthew 5:4

John 16:20-22

Fasting

- **Are you willing to focus your life?**
- **Are you willing sacrifice?**
- **What do these scriptures teach you about fasting?**

Esther 4:1-3

Daniel 9:1-4

Matthew 17:19-21

Acts 10:30

Praying to God

- **Prayer is most important before you begin any action.**
- **What do these scriptures teach you about praying to God?**

Intercessory Prayer- I Samuel 12:12-25

Power – I Kings 18:36-39

Spiritual Warfare – Ephesians 6:18-20

Relationship – John 17:1-5

Effective – James 5:13-16

A Model Prayer –Matthew 6:9-13

- **The model prayer is the one that Jesus taught to his disciples in Matthew 6:9-13 (also in Luke 11:2-4).** As you pray try to include the six elements that Jesus included.

1. Adoration
2. Submission
3. Confession
4. Petition
5. Intercession
6. Thanksgiving

- **Nehemiah included these six elements!**

Why is this a natural order for prayers to God?

Identify the **Adoration** and **Intercession** in verses 5 & 6a

⁵ Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, ^{6a} let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel.

Identify the **Submission** and **Confession** in verses 6b to 9.

^{6b} I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

⁸ Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹ but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

Identify the **Thanksgiving** in verse 10.

¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand.

Identify the **Petition** in Verse 11 (notice that petition is the last of the six parts)

¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.

- **Homework Assignment:**

1. Write your own prayer for revival in your country or the planting of your church.
2. Include the six elements that Nehemiah included, if you are able.
3. Make your prayer about 230 words long, the same length as Nehemiah's.
4. Be prepared to share your prayer tomorrow.

~ Step Three ~
Prepare a Plan in Writing
Nehemiah 2: 1-10

- **Read** Chapter 2 of Nehemiah
- **Study** the Plan of Nehemiah in Chapter 2:1 to 10

¹ In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before; ² so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart." I was very much afraid, ³ but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" ⁴ The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, ⁵ and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it." ⁶ Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time. ⁷ I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? ⁸ And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests. ⁹ So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me. ¹⁰ And when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about it, it was very displeasing to them that someone had come to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel.

- **Answer these questions by paraphrasing portions of these verses.**

1. Where is Nehemiah going?
2. Why is Nehemiah going there?
3. Did Nehemiah set a definite time for his absence?
4. Did Nehemiah have a "building permit"?
5. Did Nehemiah know what materials he would use?
6. Did Nehemiah have an escort and protection?
7. Did Nehemiah work with the local authorities?

- **What does Nehemiah's detailed plan teach us about how you should prepare your own plan?**

1. Do you know where you are going?
2. After you are spiritually prepared, are you developing a plan?
3. Are you so familiar with your plan that you can recite it at a moment's notice?

4. What does Scripture say about Planning?

Genesis 41:37-43

Proverbs 14:22

Proverbs 24:3-4

Isaiah 14:26-27

Luke 14:28-33

Romans 15:24

Homework Assignment

1. Write your own plan for revival in your country or the planting of your church. Try to be as specific as Nehemiah.
2. Show how you would include the elements that are included in Nehemiah's plan.
3. Write down your plan about 400 words long, the same length as Nehemiah's.
4. Be prepared to share your plan tomorrow.

~ Step Four ~
Make a Personal Assessment
Nehemiah 2:11-16

- **Read** Nehemiah 2:11-16
- **Study** the following two verses:

¹⁴ Then I moved on toward the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; ¹⁵ so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the Valley Gate.

- **Answer these questions about the personal assessment of Nehemiah:**
 1. How long was Nehemiah's evaluation?
 2. How many people did Nehemiah have?
 3. How many people knew about Nehemiah's plan?
 4. Did Nehemiah examine anything?
 5. Did any of the officials know what Nehemiah was doing?
 6. Why was it important for Nehemiah to make a personal evaluation?
 7. Do you think he was preparing for the events of the following day?
- **What does Nehemiah teach us about a personal assessment?**
 1. Will you study the existing situation? How can you do that?
 2. Will you take a first hand look the problem?
 3. Why is important for you that you see the problem for yourself?

- **What does Scripture say about Assessment?**

John 1:39

John 1:46

John 4:29

John 11:34

Homework Assignment

1. Write your own assessment plan.
2. Include the elements that are included in Nehemiah's evaluation.
3. Make your plan about 100 words long, the same length as Nehemiah's.
4. Be prepared to share your plan tomorrow.

~ **Step Five** ~
Motivate Others to Assist
Nehemiah 2:17-20

- **Read** Nehemiah 2: 17-20
- **Study** the following two verses:

Nehemiah 2: ¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." ¹⁸ I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

- **Answer the following questions about how Nehemiah motivated people to follow him:**
 1. What was the first thing Nehemiah said to motivate the leaders?
 2. What did Nehemiah urge the people to do?
 3. Why did Nehemiah urge them to do it?
 4. Who was on Nehemiah's side?
 5. How did the leaders respond to Nehemiah?
 6. Do you think that Nehemiah was wise to get the leaders on his side first?
- **What does Nehemiah teach us about motivation?**
 1. Are you identifying leaders and people who can help you? Who are they?
 2. Are you right now winning support from leaders?
 3. Are you trying hard to remember your personal look?

- **What does Scripture say about Motivation?**

Ephesians 4:1

Ephesians 6: 21-22

I Thessalonians 3:2-3

I Thessalonians 4:1

Romans 13:12-13

- **Homework Assignment**

1. Write your own motivational talk. The words should be emotional. They should draw me into your work.
2. Include elements that are included in Nehemiah's motivational talk. Remember, these words are meant to be spoken, not read.
3. Make your talk about 100 words long, the same length as Nehemiah's.
4. Be prepared to share your presentation tomorrow.

NOTE: Step 2 in a written plan. A plan is written in detail and designed to be read and considered thoughtfully. This step, Step 4, is an oral speech. It is brief, more general, and designed to motivate people into helping you.

~ Step Six ~
Organize the Work

Nehemiah 3:1-32

Read chapter 3 of Nehemiah

Count the names of people mentioned in Nehemiah Chapter 3.

How many names did you count? _____. If a bronze plaque were placed on the wall around Jerusalem, all these names would be affixed to it as contributors.

Nehemiah could not build the walls by himself. He needed the help of every one. You need the help of all your friends and neighbors.

Study the following verses:

Urge people with special positions to help (*Nehemiah 3:9*)

⁹ Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section.

Women can contribute their labor. (*Nehemiah 3:12*)

¹² Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.

Families are the centerpiece of the rebuilding. (*Nehemiah 3:23*)

²³ Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house.

Do your own part. It may be the biggest part.

Nehemiah mentions his contribution later. (*Nehemiah 5:16-19*)

¹⁶ Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land. ¹⁷ Furthermore, a hundred and fifty Jews and officials ate at my table, as well as those who came to us from the surrounding nations. ¹⁸ Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people. ¹⁹ Remember me with favor, O my God, for all I have done for these people.

- **Answer the following questions about how Nehemiah organized the re-building of the wall?**
 1. How was it determined who would build what?
 2. Was this individually or family led?
 3. Identify some workers with special skills needed for the rebuilding.
 4. Identify some principles in how people should work together on a common task.
 5. What was Nehemiah's job?

- **What does Nehemiah teach us about organizing your work?**
 1. Have you recruited businessmen and landowners (wealthy people) to support portions of your project?
 2. Families are the key, building their small portion of the whole. Have you recruited families to help you?
 3. Don't forget the women. Do they have a place in your project?
 4. The leader probably makes the biggest sacrifice of all. What specifically is your role?

- **What does Scripture say about organizing a task?**

Genesis 1:1

I Samuel 11-12

Philippians 1:6

Hebrews 12:1-2

Revelation 1:8

- **Homework Assignment**

1. Write down how you will organize your task.
2. Think of people you know with special gifts who can help you in special ways.
3. Think of ways that everyone in your church can help.
4. Include elements that are a part of the way that Nehemiah organized his task.
5. Be prepared to share with others tomorrow.

~ Step Seven ~
Removing the Rubbish
Nehemiah 4:10

- **Read** Chapter 4 of Nehemiah
- **Study** the following one verse

Nehemiah 4:10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall."

- **Answer these questions about removing the rubbish**
 1. What was a major complaint of the workers?
 2. Where did the rubble come from?
 3. What do you think they did with the rubble?
 4. How can you decide what rubbish is worth saving and what must be discarded?
- **What does Nehemiah teach us about removing rubbish from our life?**
 1. Should you expect to find rubbish as you labor?
 2. You cannot prosper with rubbish in your life. How can you haul it away?
 3. Don't let the amount of rubbish dishearten you. What is your plan to encourage your workers who are faced with rubbish?
 4. How can you separate the rubbish that can be recycled from that which must be removed?

- **What does Scripture say about removing rubbish, garbage and trash from our lives?**

Philippians 3:7-8

Isaiah 64:6

Job 13:23

Psalm 31: 9-10

Luke 17:33

- **Homework Assignment**

1. Pray about the rubbish in your life that is holding you back.
2. Make a list of about ten things that you must remove from your life before God can really work.
3. Include some thoughts from Nehemiah.
4. Be prepared to share with others tomorrow.

NOTE: This is not a gossip session or a confessional workshop. Share and confess with individuals you trust.

~ **Step Eight** ~
Keep a Single-minded Focus
Nehemiah, chapters 5, 6 & 7

- **Read** Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Nehemiah
- **Study** the following selected verses:

1. Expect to be mocked (*Nehemiah 4:3-6*)

Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building-- if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stones!" ⁴ Hear us, O our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵ Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders. ⁶ So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

2. Protect yourself from enemies from the outside (*Nehemiah 4:15-18*)

¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work. ¹⁶ From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah ¹⁷ who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, ¹⁸ and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

3. Learn to deal with resistance from the inside. (*Nehemiah 5:6-9*)

⁶ When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. ⁷ I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them ⁸ and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our Jewish brothers who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your brothers, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say. ⁹ So I continued, "What you are doing is not right. Shouldn't you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies?"

4. Be careful not to be diverted into schemes. (*Nehemiah 6:1-2*)

¹ When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it-- though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates-- ² Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono." But they were scheming to harm me;

5. Use Godly criteria to select leaders. (*Nehemiah 7:2*)

I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do.

• **Answer these questions about Nehemiah keeping his focus**

1. How was Nehemiah mocked? What was the result of this mockery?
2. Who were the enemies that sought to destroy Nehemiah's effort? What two jobs did the builders have? What did have in each hand?
3. What was the resistance among the followers of Nehemiah? How did he deal with it?
4. What was scheme that the enemies of Nehemiah planned for him?
5. What two kinds of people did Nehemiah put in charge of wall-building effort?

- **What does Nehemiah teach us about keeping our focus?**

1. Have you been mocked for building your church? How has this happened? Did this ever motivate you to work harder?
2. Can you Identify enemies from outside your church? Who are they? If you are being attacked, how must you be like the builders of the wall? What are the two things that you must do?
3. Are you able to discern resistance from within your assembly? Can you explain any experience you have had with resistance in your church?
4. Can you describe some schemes that have distracted you from your spiritual pursuit? What are they?
5. What is your Godly criteria to select leaders? Does Nehemiah teach that it is OK to appoint a trusted family member to an important position, as well someone who is not a family member?

- **What does Scripture say about persevering at a task?**

Matthew 24:13

Mark 13:13

Luke 9:61-62

Galatians 6:7

Hebrews 12:1

II Timothy 4:7-8

- **Homework Assignment**

Be prepared to discuss issues about “keeping your focus”, tomorrow in a small group.

~ **Step Nine** ~
Give God the Thanks
Nehemiah 8 & 9

- **Read** Chapters 8 and 9 of Nehemiah.
- **Study** the following verses:

Thank God by reading His Word. (*Nehemiah 8:1-3*)

¹ all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. ² So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³ He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Thank God by giving Him Worship (*Nehemiah 9:1-4*)

¹ On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads. ² Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. ³ They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the LORD their God. ⁴ Standing on the stairs were the Levites-- Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Kenani-- who called with loud voices to the LORD their God.

- **Answer the following questions about thanking God**
 1. Who was listening as Ezra read from the Book of the Law of Moses?
 2. How long did Ezra read from the Book?
 3. How did the people respond to the reading?
 4. What did the Israelites do to begin worship?
 5. After reading the Book, how long were the people involved in worship?
 6. What did the leaders (Levites) do?

- **Applying the lessons of Thanksgiving to your life.**
 1. Why is it important to give thanks to God by reading his Word out loud?
 2. Do you spend time in your service just reading the Bible out loud?
 3. Why is it important to give thanks to God by confessing sins, worshiping, and calling upon the Lord?
 4. Do people in your church confess their sins and call out with loud voices to the Lord?

- **What does Scripture say about giving thanks to God?**
 1. Psalm 17:17
 2. Psalm 95:2
 3. Psalm 100:1-5
 4. II Corinthians 9:15
 5. I Thessalonians 2:13
 6. Hebrews 12:28

- **Homework Assignment**

Be prepared to discuss issues about “giving thanks to God”, tomorrow in a small group.

~ **Step Ten** ~
Make a Covenant
Nehemiah 10

- **Read** Chapter 10 of Nehemiah
- **Study** the following two verses about making a covenant:

They covenant to walk in God's law

²⁸ Now the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding, ²⁹ are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of God our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes;

They promise to keep religion pure of foreign influences

³⁰ and that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. ³¹ As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego the crops the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

They promise to support the activities of the Church with money

³² We also placed ourselves under obligation to contribute yearly one third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: ³³ for the showbread, for the continual grain offering, for the continual burnt offering, the sabbaths, the new moon, for the appointed times, for the holy things and for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God.

They promise to support the activities of the Church with products & labor

³⁴ Likewise we cast lots for the supply of wood among the priests, the Levites, and the people in order that they might bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers' households, at fixed times annually, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God as it is written in the law; ³⁵ and in order that they might bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all the fruit of every tree to the house of the LORD annually, ³⁶ and bring to the house of our God the first-born of our sons and of our cattle, and the first-born of our herds and our flocks as it is written in the law, for the priests who are ministering in the house of our God. ³⁷ We will also bring the first of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the oil to the priests at the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are they who receive the tithes in all the rural towns. ³⁸ And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites shall bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse.

They promise not to neglect the house of the Lord

³⁹ For the sons of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of the grain, the new wine and the oil, to the chambers; there are the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers, and the singers. Thus we will not neglect the house of our God.

- **Answer the following questions about making a covenant**

1. What kinds of people entered into a covenant with God?
2. Why did the people take an oath not to mix with foreign people?
3. How much money and other material did the people pledge to contribute to the house of the Lord?
4. What kinds of things did the people promise in support of the house of the Lord? Did they involve tithe, talent, and time?
5. Why was so important that the people promised not to neglect the house of our God?

- **Applying the lessons of covenant making to your life**
 1. Why is it so natural that people enter into a covenant at important moments in life (like marriage or a church dedication)?
 2. In the body of Christ today, how can we interpret an oath “not to mix with foreign people”?
 3. In what ways can people in your church offer their tithe, talent, and time?
 4. Do you think that the center of the covenant is to “not neglect the house of the Lord”?

- **What does Scripture say about giving thanks to God?**
 1. Genesis 9::9-17
 2. Genesis 15:18
 3. Psalm 25:10-14
 4. Malachi 3:8-10
 5. Hebrews 9:15-18

- **Homework Assignment**
 1. Write your own covenant.
 2. Include elements that are included in Nehemiah’s covenant.
 3. Make your covenant a few hundred words long, about the same length as Nehemiah’s.
 4. Be prepared to share your covenant tomorrow.

~ **Step Eleven** ~

Dedicate your Work to God
Nehemiah, chapter 12

- **Read** Chapter 12 of Nehemiah.
- **Study** the following verses.

Celebrate (*Nehemiah 12:27-30*)

²⁷ At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. ²⁸ The singers also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem-- from the villages of the Netophathites, ²⁹ from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem.

Purify (*Nehemiah 12:30*)

³⁰ When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.

Rejoice (*Nehemiah 12:43*)

⁴³ And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.

- **Answer the following questions about dedicating your work to God**
 1. How many people came to this dedication of the wall?
 2. In what ways did they celebrate?
 3. Why were the priests, the people and the wall purified?
 4. Why were the people rejoicing?
 5. How loud was the rejoicing?

- **Applying lessons about dedication your work to God.**
 1. Should you try to bring in as many people as you can to your dedication?
 2. Why is singing such a big part of celebrating?
 3. At your dedication service how can you symbolically purify your people and your work?
 4. Should you be concerned about how loud the sound of your rejoicing becomes?

- **What does Scripture say about dedicating your work to God? (Celebrating, Purifying, and Rejoicing)**
 1. II Samuel 8:11
 2. II Chronicles 2:4
 3. II Chronicles 29:31
 4. Psalm 145:7
 5. Luke 15:23-24
 6. Romans 5:1-3
 7. Philippians 4:4

- **Homework Assignment**
 1. Write out a plan for your dedication service.
 2. Include elements that are included in Nehemiah's dedication service. (who will attend, who will speak, and who will sing. Also include an element of purifying)
 3. Be prepared to share your dedication plan tomorrow.

~ **Step Twelve** ~
Never Stop your Quality Control
Nehemiah, chapter 13

- **Read** Chapter 13 of Nehemiah.
- **Study** the following two verses:

⁷ and (Nehemiah) came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. ⁸ I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

- **Answer the following questions about quality control**
 1. After Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem was everything still in order as he had left it?
 2. How did Tobiah manage to get special treatment and why was this offensive to Nehemiah?

- **What can you learn from Nehemiah in regard to quality control?**
 1. Even when your work is successfully completed, is there still a need to monitor the situation? Can you ever sit back, relax and expect all people to act responsibly?
 2. How do you continually insure quality control over you project?

- **What does Scripture say about follow-through and quality control?**
 1. Psalm 48:14
 2. Matthew 24:9-13
 3. I Timothy 4:16
 4. Hebrews 10:36
 5. Revelation 2:26

- **Homework Assignment**

Be prepared to discuss issues about “quality control”, tomorrow in a small group.

Reflection and Review:

What are the most important lessons that you learned from studying the Book of Nehemiah?

How can you apply these lessons to your life?