

PLANNING TO DO GOD'S WILL

Nehemiah 1:11b-2:20

Sometimes it's hard to wait on the Lord!

God doesn't work on OUR timetable.

He may take weeks, months, or even YEARS to accomplish His plan.

We want Him to do things quickly,

but it often seems that God takes so *l-o-n-g* to do His work.

When a 1000 years are like a day, you're in no hurry!

Why cant God just do everything "*right now*" –according to *our* desire?

It's hard for us to learn that in God's program, one of the highest values is patience—learning to wait on the Lord!

Nehemiah has learned that lesson! *He's in no hurry!*

He's willing to take his time, prepare carefully,

and wait for God to carry out His plan *in His way, in His time!*

Story begins with preparatory events which enable them to achieve the goal.

NEHEMIAH'S PROVINCE WITH ITS TROUBLE 1:1-3

Delegation from Jerusalem informs him of desolate conditions

=>

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER 1:4-11a

Nehemiah takes his petition in prayer to God.

Nehemiah subjects his petition to the plan of God.

He makes sure *his* plan lines up with *God's* plan.

Nehemiah bases his petition on the promises of God.

4 LESSONS from Nehemiah's example: [1 s t
lesson:]

**NEHEMIAH HAS TO PRAY AND WAIT
FOR GOD TO DO HIS WORK IN THE KING'S HEART.**

He has to wait patiently *4 months*.

While God does move the heart and hand of the most powerful king in the world in response to Nehemiah's prayer, things don't happen fast or easy—even after he arrives in Jerusalem.

God doesn't work on our time schedule!

WE're in too big a hurry!

We often have to be content to pray and allow God time to work.

especially, if He has to change the heart of a king.

Some cases are hard to crack—they take time!

But, "Changing a heart is God's specialty." CS

Don't try to manipulate or force your way!

We get impatient when things don't happen on OUR schedule.

We think we have to make them happen *our way in our time*.

We forget Who's in charge!

Praying and waiting go hand in hand.

We can leave our concern in GOD'S hands—let HIM do it—in His time!!

NEHEMIAH'S PETITION TO THE KING 1:11b-2:8

Nehemiah has to go before the king and ask permission.

This same king ordered them to stop building a few years before.

PETITION MADE 1:11b-2:5 *I was cupbearer to the king.*

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."

Nehemiah's waiting for an opportunity to present his concern; he's thinking about home, when the king notices his sadness.

Nehemiah is frightened; he could be killed for sadness before king.

His request is carefully considered—He knows what to ask. His sadness is natural, *since his hometown is in ruins.*

He appeals to the pagan king's reverence for ancestors, mentioning the condition of his "fathers' tombs."

Nehemiah blends human and divine resources to achieve goal.

***NEHEMIAH UNDERSTANDS THE BALANCE
BETWEEN GOD'S ROLE AS LORD
AND HIS ROLE AS GOD'S SERVANT.***

He trusts God to accomplish His purpose.

He knows what God sent him to do and does it.

It's hard to maintain that balance:

We want to let God do what He's told us to do!

When God says, "*Leave the results to me,*"

WE want to jump in and do HIS job.

If He doesn't do it on *our* schedule, *we'll* do it *for Him!*

When the opportunity comes, Nehemiah shoots up a prayer for God to do His work,

He asks God for help to say the right thing,

then proceeds to do what he's prepared to do.

Nehemiah knows how to use his resources to get the job done.

When the king presents a window of opportunity, he uses it wisely.

PETITION GRANTED 2:6-8 *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.***

He isn't afraid to ask for more, once he knows he has king's support.

Even a pagan king's resources are under God's control and available.

***“Faith is not a synonym for disorder,
nor a substitute for careful planning.”***

Nehemiah has a carefully conceived plan. 2:6-8

He knows how long it will take. 6

He knows the problems and opposition he can expect 7

He knows what resources will be needed. 8

With all Nehemiah's planning, he recognizes that **God** accomplishes it.

God grants him compassion before king—**God's good hand is on him!**

NEHEMIAH'S PREVIEW OF THE SITUATION 2:9-16

With backing of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah sets out for Jerusalem.

PRESENTATION TO LOCAL OFFICIALS 2:9 *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.*

DISCONTENT BY LOCAL OFFICIALS 10 *When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.*

The officials of neighboring countries are upset, but can't stop him.

They look for ways to discourage and oppose him.

“Opposition is to be expected when God's will is carried out.”

SURVEY OF LOCAL CONDITIONS 11-16 *I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days¹² I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put*

in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.¹³ By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.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.¹⁶ The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

He keeps silent at first about his purpose.

No press conference; no public promises!

He gives the enemy no advance warning.

He waits for God, to take advantage of opportunity to motivate them.

He observes who's likely to identify with him and get involved.

Before presenting his plan, he tours at night to understand the situation and prepare places for the project.

NEHEMIAH'S PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN 2:17-20

At the proper time he calls people together to discuss the plan.

PLAN ADOPTED 2:17-18 *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.

Three elements (come together in plan):

1) Their knowledge of the city's condition

He builds on their observations and dissatisfaction.

2) His experience of God's working.

He builds on his testimony of what God has already done.

3) The king's support for the project.

He builds on what God has already done through a pagan king.

He helps them recognize the problem and desire a solution.

They identify with his vision and accept it as their own.

[3rd lesson from Nehemiah's example:]

**NEHEMIAH UNDERSTANDS PEOPLE HE'S WORKING
WITH AND KNOWS HOW TO MOTIVATE THEM
TO DO GOD'S WORK GOD'S WAY**

He doesn't jump right in – he waits for the right moment.

He doesn't use rewards to motivate them, but their internal desire

When it comes to doing God's work, don't expect great rewards.

But God is doing something and we want to participate.

He shares testimony of how God has *already* worked as a means of motivating them to join in what God is doing.

Our experience in SLC: One of main motivating factors in moving ahead with our vision was the evidence that God's hand was at work among us.

Just as Nehemiah did, we spent time in prayer.

We saw evidence that this was God's plan.

We considered His promises.

We came to a conviction: it's time to get on with it.

We were ready for popular response:

"LET US ARISE AND BUILD!"

PLAN OPPOSED 2:19 *But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?"*

When God begins to do something, opposition immediately surfaces.

Why does it surprise us when opposition arises against God's work?

He who dares to lead for God will face opposition.

Once Nehemiah's convinced of what God wants, there's no turning back.

A godly leader must not be intimidated.

He must stand firm, even before the opposition.

No one lacking courage of conviction and commitment will succeed at the front of *any* divine undertaking.

There's always opposition!

(I don't like that!)- NONE of us likes that! But you can count on it! *Satan isn't going to "roll over and play dead!"*

PLAN ASSURED 2:20 *I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."*

[4th lesson]

**IN SPITE OF MOUNTING OPPOSITION,
NEHEMIAH IS COMMITTED TO COMPLETING THE TASK**

Threats and ultimatums won't intimidate him.

Nehemiah's security isn't based on *circumstances*.

He sees beyond circumstances;

he places his confidence in God Who brought him to this point.

APPLICATION TO OUR LIFE TODAY:

[Lessons for US to learn:]

1. **We must learn to pray and then wait for God to do His work.**
2. **We must learn the balance between God's role as Lord and our role as His servants.**
3. **We must learn to understand people and learn how to motivate them to do God's work in God's way.**
4. **When God leads us to do something, we must be committed to completing it.**

Nehemiah makes a careful plan.

He waits for God's timing to make it happen.

He motivates the people to trust God and get involved.

He makes a personal commitment to see it through.

Only then does he ask, **Who will commit themselves to join him?**

Key to understanding passage: it isn't about a building project.

Nehemiah's concern: **that people living in a desolate land**

become aware of God's glory and turn back to Him.

He understands his main priority: to build up people to follow God!

The building is only a means to accomplish that purpose.

That's what our vision was about when we committed to build in SLC

That's what vision to Build Up to Reach Out is about (or bldg. refurbishing)

We, like them, have seen God do great things.

We can trust Him!

We can commit ourselves to follow and glorify Him.

We can trust Him to accomplish this great task *through us*.

We can trust Him to glorify Himself through us
and watch Him use us to attract others to Himself

BUT, it will take commitment on our part.

God has taken us this far, can we trust Him to do the rest?

Will we together say: "*Let US arise and build (His church)?!*"

Nehemiah commits himself to know and do God's will.

He wants to know God's plan

–then He commits himself to do God's will, God's way.

We believe God's will for this church is to "*Build Up to Reach Out.*"

God wants US to "**Build PEOPLE!**" that we, as His people, might become all *HE* wants us to be, for His glory!

=> "WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?"