STANDING TALL
Developing a Leader’s Heart through the study of Nehemiah
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(Nehemiah Part I)
developed by Denton Cormanyc
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"Becoming a leader," what do we mean when we use those words? If I were asked to define leadership in one word, the word would be *influence*. You lead someone by the measure you influence them.

We can read about one such man of influence in the book of Nehemiah in the Bible. Nehemiah, lived around 425 BC and was a man prominent in business and politics in the ancient Middle East. He not only had an exceptional philosophy of leadership, but he lived it for all to see.

In this biblical manual for potential leaders, we find timeless and reliable guidelines that work. They enable us to know how to build quality characteristics in ourselves and in others. These truths are modeled by Nehemiah as he accomplishes an incredible project against unbelievable odds.

This series is designed to give us the opportunity to consider God’s Word through our own study and through the interaction in small group discussion. Join us for Part I, as we trust God to make us the leaders He has called us to be.

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STANDING TALL
SESSION 1: Completely His

Completely His

Nehemiah 1:1-4

What do we usually do with other people’s problems? What are your escape mechanisms? What if God calls you to meet a need? Wrong number? Maybe later? Don’t bother me?

What made Nehemiah not only demonstrate his interest in the things of God, but ask and then respond in the way he did? What enabled him to lead?
**Introduction:**

- Set the Stage

- Define Leadership

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**Nehemiah 1:1-4 (ESV)**

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

**Nehemiah’s Prayer**

4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.
SESSION 1: Completely His

- The Need to Know

- Getting Involved

- A Heart Completely His

Everything rises and falls on leadership.

- John Maxwell,
  Developing the Leader Within You²
Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways do I see myself as an influencer of others?

2. How well do I know the needs of my family, neighbors and co-workers? Why do I know their needs, or why not?

3. How do I normally respond to bad news? What causes me to get involved?

4. How involved am I in the things that are affecting those I care about?

5. In what ways am I investing my life in others?

6. What can we learn from Nehemiah's response to the crisis in his day in Jerusalem?
SESSION 1: Completely His

**Action Steps:**

Am I willing to be a leader?
Are the things that bother God bothering me?
In what areas of my life am I not completely His? Why?
How will I answer God’s call on my life?

**Memory Verse:**

For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

- 2 Chronicles 18:9 (NASB)
Lambs Among Wolves

What is your leadership style? An incident from Jesus’ life gives us some new insight into how we are to lead. He is sending 72 disciples ahead of him into the villages nearby to prepare his arrival, and in Luke 10:3 (NIV), He says, “Go now, and remember I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.” On the surface it seems innocent enough, but when you stop and think of what He is asking them to do, all of a sudden you realize He is introducing a whole new way of leading. Servant Leadership. Instead of wolf on wolf, He is sending them out as lambs among wolves.

Sheep are docile in nature, timid and nervous, highly social animals and need to be in groups to avoid unnecessary stress. Isolation of individual sheep usually causes anxiety. They tend to follow one another in grazing, bedding down, reacting to obstacles, and feeding. Sheep have no claws, no sharp teeth, no horns. I think we could describe them as helpless, defenseless, non-resistant, submissive, and completely dependent on the care of a shepherd. They are led, not driven.

On the other hand, wolves are very cunning, self-serving, ravenous, savage. Jesus warned in Matthew 7:15 (NIV), “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheeps clothing, but inwardly, they are ferocious wolves.” Wolves are described as false prophets. They appear externally to be godly men, but they are false. How are we to relate to others who have their own agenda, and are only looking out for themselves? What lessons can we learn from Jesus’s instruction? What is His way of living, loving and leading?

Jesus in Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV) gives us some insight. “…You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you, instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus changed their thinking about how to live, love and lead, and when they put it into practice, they saw God work in people’s lives and they came back rejoicing. He wants to do the same for us. Are we willing to follow His lead?
Overview Questions for Session 2:
Taking It to God (Nehemiah 1:4-11)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. Nehemiah was a person who cared. List evidence of how you know this.

2. How did Nehemiah approach God with his problem?

3. What is the essence of his prayer to God?

4. How did he identify with his fellow Jews?

5. What did he believe God for?
STANDING TALL
Taking It to God

Nehemiah 1:4-11

Taking It to God

How many goals are unfulfilled in our lives because we do not ask for what we need - either from God or others?

How well do you know God? Do you ask in an informed way or just send up a flare? Does it bother you - your lack of compassion, urgency, alarm, faith?

Nehemiah took his awakened heart to God. Let’s check it out!
Nehemiah 1:4-11 (ESV)

Nehemiah’s Prayer

4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. 8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” ....

Introduction:

• What message did Nehemiah hear and take to heart? (Jeremiah 29:10-14)
• When a serious leader has a problem, he takes it to God first.

A. High view of God. (Nehemiah 1:4-5)

B. Confessing. (Nehemiah 1:6-7)

C. Calling upon the justice and grace of God. (Nehemiah 1:8-9)

D. Asking for blessing and favor. (Nehemiah 1:11)
Discussion Questions:

1. How would others who know you describe your heart? Would they say it is hard? Self-centered? Desensitized? Compassionate?

2. What drives you to your knees?

3. When you pray, what do you expect?

4. What promises are you claiming?

5. As you pray, in what ways do you focus on God versus the problem?

6. What do you need for Him to do?

Prayer is not a substitute for work, or merely preparation for work. It is work.

- Ron Dunn,
“Don’t just stand there, pray something”
Action Steps:

1. I will go to God first with my needs.

2. I will take responsibility for my actions and bear the burdens of others.

3. I will lead courageously as I follow His lead and trust His provision.

Memory Verse:

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

- Jeremiah 29:12-13 (NIV)
My Refuge and Strength Always

Why is “Oh my God!” the first words out of our mouth when tragedy strikes? Why would we say those words? I don’t hear us using the names of other religious leaders, do you? Are they words of slang, endearment or desperation? Is it just our natural response? Or is it a soul cry for someone to listen, someone to come to our aid? Can we know a God who hears us and is knowable and able? A popular Christian song, written by Kristian Stanfill, begins with, “Oh my God, He will not delay, my refuge and strength always. I will not fear, His promise is true. My God will come through always.”

God’s instruction to us in the middle of life’s battles is “Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Ephesians 6:18 (NLT). What should we expect? The Spirit is called the Helper, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the source of the power that raised Jesus from the dead. “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” Romans 8:26-27 (ESV). We have the opportunity to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit as followers of Christ, and expect a response to our requests.

We might ask, “You mean to tell me that being one of seven billion people on the planet, God knows me, knows all about me, and as I love Him and seek His purpose for my life, He will work all things together for good?” The Bible comes back with a resounding yes! Listen to what Jude has to say; “But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God’s love.” Jude 20-21 (NLT). The brother of Jesus, James, has this to say; “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” James 5:16b (NLT). That we would become men and women of faith who would say, Oh my God! My refuge and strength always.
Overview Questions for Session 3:
Desperate Faith (Nehemiah 1:11 - 2:8)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What is the significance of God’s sovereign will for your life?

2. Describe “Desperate Faith” from this passage.

3. What motivated Nehemiah to face his fear, and boldly ask the king what he needed? How should you handle fear in your life?

4. What will move you to desperate faith? More difficult circumstances, or a greater understanding of God’s provision? Why?
Desperate Faith

Think of a time you felt desperate. What words or images would you use to describe the situation you faced? What did you do?

God has given us the example of Nehemiah as a encouragement to seek His face, and develop a trust relationship with Him that defies the circumstances of life. Nehemiah found Him trustworthy!
**Nehemiah 1:11 - 2:8 (ESV)**

**Nehemiah’s Prayer**

11 “O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” Now I was cupbearer to the king.

**Nehemiah Sent to Judah**

2 1 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

2 And the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. 3 I said to the king, “Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” 4 Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ graves, that I may rebuild it.” 6 And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), “How long will you be gone, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time. 7 And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy.” And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.
SESSION 3: Desperate Faith

Review and Introduction:

• Strategic Presence
  (Nehemiah 1:11) (Esther 4:13-14)

• Crossing the Threshold
  (Nehemiah 2:1-3) (Philippians 3:12)

• Trusting God’s Provision
  (Nehemiah 2:4-8)
  (Romans 4:16-22 - Example of Abraham)

RADICAL FAITH IS CHOOSING TO STEP OUT TO FULFILL GOD’S CLEARLY DEFINED WILL AT POSSIBLE GREAT PERSONAL RISK AND SACRIFICE.

- CHIP INGRAM, HOLY AMBITION
Discussion Questions:

1. Why are you where you are?

2. What threshold do you need to cross by faith?

3. How did Nehemiah manage His fear?

4. What can you learn about desperate faith from Nehemiah and Abraham?

5. How do you think Nehemiah was able to answer the king’s specific questions?

6. In what area of your life is God calling for desperate faith?
**Session 3: Desperate Faith**

**Action Steps:**

1. Ask God to make you aware of why you are where you are.
2. Ask for faith to believe God’s direction and provision.
3. Act on the opportunities He gives.

**Memory Verse:**

“The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.”

- Proverbs 21:1 (NASB)
Alert Discipline

What does it mean to be a disciplined individual? We admire individuals who rise above the mediocre and display a level of maturity or accomplishment or perfection, whether it be in art, sports or vocation. And we should. But how are we to become that disciplined person? Is it to deny ourselves of certain things for a period of time? Or through focused effort to conquer self? Is it through intense training? Or do we just grow into being a disciplined individual? Christianity offers a radical departure from our normal way of reaching our goals.

In ourselves we do not have the desire or power to produce lasting change in ourselves or anyone else. That may tempt you to not read on, but please do. The One who made us knows our need and has provided a Savior, Jesus Christ, who through His death on the cross and resurrection has provided the grace (desire and power) to overcome death and experience life to the fullest. Notice carefully what Paul says; “My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 (NLT). What does this mean? It is a personal relationship with God that is a faith partnership. Life is to be lived by trusting in what He has done and is doing for us, not what we can do for ourselves. “We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with Him... So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:6-8,11 (NLT). It is Christ’s life that we need to become the disciplined individual we long to be. And it is being alert and responsive to God and His Word that enables us to experience the character and behavior that only He can provide. We are to take it seriously, knowing that it is God that is providing the desire and power to do what pleases Him. That is living a life of alert discipline.
Overview Questions for Session 4:
Developing a Plan (Nehemiah 1:4 and 2:9-16)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. Read between the lines. Describe the dialogue that must have gone on between God and Nehemiah during the four months he sought the Lord on behalf of Jerusalem.

2. What did God show him he would need?

3. What can you learn from Nehemiah about your role in God’s plans?

4. What is involved in making a plan to accomplish a task?
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Developing a Plan

When have you needed a plan recently? Where did you start? What role did prayer have in it?

How are we to determine a plan anyway? Nehemiah clearly understood the value of planning. What can we learn from Nehemiah about the strategic importance of a plan?
Review and Introduction:

• Let’s Look at Nehemiah’s Solution:
  (Nehemiah 1:4 - Pray and Plan)
SESSION 4: Developing a Plan

• **What was Involved in the Plan?**
  Direction:
  
  **Vision**
  
  **Mission**
  
  Took Inventory:
  
  **The Situation**
  
  **Critical Mass - the resources needed?**
  (Luke 14:27-28)

• **The Path to Take**
  
  The Overview
  (Nehemiah 2:1-8)
  
  **The Details**
  (Nehemiah 2:9-16)
Discussion Questions:

1. What sort of things do you plan for?

2. What did you observe from Nehemiah’s pray and plan sessions?

3. What are some of the ingredients in developing a plan?

4. What keeps you from planning?

5. What have you learned about planning from Nehemiah’s experience?

6. In what ways are you willing to be the person God uses to make a difference in your world?
Action Steps:

1. Where in your life do you need a plan?
2. Pray and plan.
3. Begin to implement the plan.

Memory Verse:

“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

- Proverbs 16:9 (ESV)
In The Fullness of Time

Only a few people were involved. Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth, an innkeeper, lowly shepherds doing what shepherds do, wise men who came to acknowledge God’s gift to men, Herod who was threatened by a young king, and prophets of hundreds and thousands of years before who had predicted every detail of the event – were the only ones who knew something out of the ordinary was about to happen. To everyone else, life went on as usual. But God was about to put into action His plan from eternity past. That plan involved gathering a people from every tribe, every nation, every race, that would embrace His gift to man. That gift would arrive in the fullness of time.

The Apostle Paul describes the event in Galatians 4:4-6; “But when the right time came, the time God decided on, He sent His Son, born of a woman, born as a Jew, to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law so that He could adopt us as His very own sons. And because we are His sons God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, so now we can rightly speak of God as our dear Father.” (The Living Bible).

God knew before He created the heavens and the earth that we would need a Savior. He made us with minds, emotions and wills. He knew we would all go our own way. But He looked beyond our faults, and saw our need, and in the fullness of time, He put into motion the most comprehensive rescue plan the world has ever known.

The details that had to come together over centuries and centuries are mindboggling, details that only God could pull off. We read in John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (ESV). God chose for an angel to announce His arrival as recorded in Luke 2:10-11, “And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’” (ESV).

God’s plan is not finished yet! Many are yet to respond to His invitation. Many are waiting on you and me to tell them the Greatest Story that has ever been told. In the fullness of time, He is still revealing Himself to man.
Overview Questions for Session 5:
Rebuilding the Wall (Nehemiah 2:17-20, 3:1-13)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What was it about the way Nehemiah communicated the need to rebuild the wall that motivated people to action?

2. What can you learn about how he got them to work together? Why were they so committed?

3. As you read Nehemiah 3:1-23, describe momentum and its benefits for getting the job done.

4. Describe the diversity of people involved in building the wall.
Rebuilding the Wall

How many times have you had a plan, but no matter how hard you try, you can’t make it work? Maybe you are doing okay as a one-man show, but how do you get others involved with you?

Vision, many times, is the missing ingredient. How do you become a leader who is a vision caster?
Nehemiah 2:17-20; 3:1-23 (ESV)

17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” 18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work. 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” 20 Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”

Rebuilding the Wall

3 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. 2 And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. 3 The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired. And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord. 6 Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Gate of Yeshanah. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 7 And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River. 8 Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.
Nehemiah 3:1-23 (ESV) - CONTINUED

9 Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired. 10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. 12 Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters. 13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate. 14 Malchijah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 15 And Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king’s garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. 16 After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men. 17 After him the Levites repaired: Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. 18 After him their brothers repaired: Bavvai the son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. 19 Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. 22 After him the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. 23 After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house.
Review and Introduction:

- Components of a Vision:
  (Nehemiah 2:17-18)
  - The Problem

- The Solution

- The Reason
  (1 Peter 3:15) (Joshua 2:24)

- The Power of Vision and of Believing in Others
  (Ephesians 4:29) (Ephesians 5:25) (Ephesians 6:4)
SESSION 5: Rebuilding the Wall

- Not Getting Distracted
  (Nehemiah 2:19-20)

- Rebuilding the Wall
  (Nehemiah 3:1-23)

  - Keywords

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COUPLE A VISION WITH A LEADER WILLING TO IMPLEMENT THAT DREAM AND A MOVEMENT BEGINS.
- ROBERT MAXWELL

DEVELOPING THE LEADER WITHIN YOU²
Discussion Questions:

1. What is God’s plan for your life?

2. What is your role in His plan?

3. What is your vision (a verbal picture) of what can be accomplished?

4. What difference will it make and for whom?

5. Who has God put in your life right now with whom you can share your vision?

6. What part of the wall can you rebuild together?

HELEN KELLER WAS ASKED, “WHAT WOULD BE WORSE THAN BEING BORN BLIND?” SHE REPLIED, “TO HAVE SIGHT WITHOUT VISION.”

- JOHN MAXWELL, DEVELOPING THE LEADER WITHIN YOU
Action Steps:

1. Ask God for a vision.
2. Learn how to communicate it.
3. Learn how to develop others.

Memory Verse:

“Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained,
But happy is he who keeps the law.”
- Proverbs 29:18 (NASB)
Vision

Vision is defined as the act of seeing, but I would like for us to consider another definition; vision is the act or power of anticipating that which will or may come to be. Those that can predict the future always have a following, don’t they? We humans have an insatiable appetite to know the future. I don’t know whether it gives us a sense of power, or confidence, or what, but our ears perk up when a consultant on the future shows up. My question for all of us is, “What or who do we trust to accurately predict the future?” Does anyone know?

We have heard the Scripture all of our lives, “Where there is no vision, the people perish…” or in one of the latest translations it says, “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is the one who keeps the law.” Proverbs 29:18 (ESV). For centuries we who are followers of Christ have staked our lives on God and His Word as the source of prophetic vision. We have embraced the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, and His description of what is to come has given us hope and clear direction for now and eternity. But is that still true for today? Many think not.

In His Word, God has given us His vision for creation for all time; “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” Genesis 1:27-28 (ESV). I believe there are some instructions for us that express His original vision:

1.) Be fruitful and multiply;
2.) Fill the earth and subdue it;
3.) Have dominion over all creation.

Have we tried to mess that up or what? But don’t be dismayed, there is good news, He will triumph, and we who know Him personally will too.

God is so practical. Vision has the power to transform our thinking, to awaken hope, and to motivate us to action. But is the source of our vision the Word of God, or have we settled for politicians, or experts, or today’s horoscope or the latest fad? My greatest passion is that we return to the God who is our vision.
Overview Questions for Session 6:
Overcoming Opposition (Nehemiah 4:1-23)

Read the passage, then consider the following questions as you prepare for next week’s discussion.

1. What causes discouragement in your life?

2. To whom do you vent when ridiculed?

3. How did Nehemiah and the other Jews respond?

4. How did they counter the threat? What can you learn from their actions?

5. How do you handle weariness?
Why do we pray for boldness? We are afraid.

Without courage, we cannot live the life we wish, instead we relinquish life. We conform to the path of least resistance, and abdicate our freedom.

Great dreams require great courage. The source of courage is the Spirit of God, no one else. We are not free from the emotion of fear, but we are free in Christ from the control and paralyzing effect of fear. Let’s see how Nehemiah dealt with discouragement.
Nehemiah 4:1-23 (ESV)

The Opposition to the Work

1 Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. 2 And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?” 3 Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!” 4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. 5 Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders. 6 So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. 7 But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. 8 And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. 9 And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. 10 In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” 11 And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” 12 At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.” 13 So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”
Nehemiah 4:1-23 (ESV) - CONTINUED

The Work Resumes

15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. 16 From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, 17 who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. 18 And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. 19 And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. 20 In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” 21 So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. 22 I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.” 23 So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.
Standing Tall

Review and Introduction:

- **Ridicule**
  (Nehemiah 4:1-3)

- **Nehemiah’s Response**
  (Nehemiah 4:4-9)

- **Discouragement’s Effect**
  (Nehemiah 4:10-11)

WHO WE ARE IN OUR BEING DETERMINES HOW WELL WE WILL RELATE TO OTHERS OVER TIME AND HOW EFFECTIVE WE WILL BE GETTING WORK DONE.

- DENTON CORMANY, LEADERSHIP MODULE III, NEHEMIAH 1

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• How to Overcome Discouragement

Failed plans should not be interpreted as a failed vision. When the plans fail, the vision must be recast.

- Denton Cormany, Leadership Module III, Nehemiah

FAILED PLANS SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS A FAILED VISION. WHEN THE PLANS FAIL, THE VISION MUST BE RECAST.

- DENTON CORMANY, LEADERSHIP MODULE III, NEHEMIAH

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Discussion Questions:

1. Why are we critical of others?

2. Have you ever wanted to run away? Why?

3. What do you do when you are criticized?

4. What can we learn from Nehemiah’s facing opposition?

5. How do you overcome discouragement?
### Action Steps:

1. Always consider the source of character assassination.
2. Pray and persist.
3. Seek the fellowship and encouragement of other believers.

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### Memory Verse:

"1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

- 2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NASB)
Servant Leadership

Servant leader— is that an oxymoron? Do they even go together? If you have the opportunity to lead, why would you want to serve others? This is my life; I am going to get all that is coming to me. So we do, and if done long enough, we become isolated, lonely, disillusioned and purposeless. Many never wake up to the obvious; that servant and leader were intended to go hand in hand from the beginning. The first couple, Adam and Eve, were given the assignment of servant leader by God, but blew it because wanting to be god was more tempting than being a servant leader of God. They gave in to the roadblock that keeps all of us from experiencing the joy of leading others with a servant heart.

Have you ever considered yourself a servant leader? Why not? Is it because we don’t know what it looks like, or is it we just don’t want to sacrifice what we have our eyes set on? Or is it just beneath us to be called a servant? Anyway, what is involved in being willing to be a servant to others? Why be a servant? Can’t someone else do that? I have leading to do. I don’t have time to understand what makes people think, feel and act as they do. The Apostle Paul, one of the greatest leaders of all time, has this to say about himself; “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.” I Corinthians 4:1-2 (ESV). What did he know that we need to put into practice in our own lives?

All valid leadership is servant leadership. And you cannot learn to be a servant leader without learning to follow. Paul’s journey was altered on the road to Damascus by Christ Himself. He was made very aware by that encounter with God that he needed to learn how to follow. That same Jesus had this to say in Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.” Luke 9:23-24 (ESV). Only God can transform our hearts, make us new creatures, empower us through His Spirit, and lead us to be followers— servant leaders.
STANDING TALL
Session 1 - Completely His
2. Ibid, Introduction.
3. Ibid, 103.

Session 2 - Taking It to God

Session 3 - Desperate Faith

Session 4 - Developing a Plan
2. Ibid, Introduction.

Session 5 - Rebuilding the Wall
3. Ibid, 139.
4. Ibid, 140.

Session 6 - Overcoming Opposition
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.