

Nehemiah

A LIFE OF PRINCIPLE AND PURPOSE

Study Guide

Guiding Teachers and Students
in Personal Life Management

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Nehemiah and Personal Life Management

Principles of personal life management are timeless. The same principles that led youthful Nehemiah in a foreign country to eventually bring about revival among God's people are the principles that move faithful youth into lives that reflect well-ordered living today.

Personality and talents fill a place, but true greatness is built upon character which grows out of self discipline and a close walk with God. God cannot bless someone who has not learned to discipline himself. He may be used as a tool to demonstrate some eternal principle, but he cannot serve God's people and be a blessing.

Leadership did not come to Nehemiah because he determined to be the governor of Jerusalem. Nehemiah determined to be faithful in little things. Eventually God was able to weigh him down with this formidable responsibility and Nehemiah could bear it well. God longs to find more faithful persons toward whom He can show Himself strong and accomplish His purposes (2Ch 16:9).

We sometimes hear an emphasis that we can be anything we choose to be. Supposedly we could even be the president of the United States if we just made up our minds to be! This teaching is false. Do not burden your school students with it! Character wise we can choose to be faithful. But as far as responsibilities, the Bible teaches us that calling is without repentance (Rom 11:29). This means God determines the role we will fill, and it is up to us how we will fill it. In terms of national leadership, God even sets up the basest of men in order to accomplish his purposes (Dan 4:17).

Most of the truly great Bible characters did not become that by self determination. Joseph did not become rulers over the land of Egypt because of schemes and daydreams. Ruth didn't become the wife of a wealthy man and great-grandmother to a king because she plotted a path of greatness. Shepherd David did not become king because he chose to be. True greatness comes to those who make the difficult choices of personal life management and allow God to find the niche they are to fill.

We encourage you to take this example which was written for our admonition (1Cor 10:11) and apply each lesson to your personal life. Then reflect these same principles into the lives of your students. They will be blessed for a lifetime as they take these principles and make them their own.

Nehemiah —

Introduction and Personal Overview

Nehemiah was the son of Hachaliah (1:1) and very likely of a family which belonged to Jerusalem (2:3). This would have made him from the tribe of Judah. The name Nehemiah means “Jehovah comforts.”

He was raised in the captivity of Babylon, and as a young man was trained to be a royal cupbearer at Shushan in Persia under King Artaxerxes Longimanus. His work was to taste the wine before the king to assure him that he was not being poisoned. We are uncertain if this king was the husband or the step son of Esther, but there is likelihood that the queen referred to in Neh. 2:6 was Esther herself. There seems to have been a certain friendly familiarity between Nehemiah and the king, though also a great respect and fear on Nehemiah’s part. One does well to remember the great awe with which Esther approached her own husband. (Esther 4:11)

Just like Judah and Jerusalem had been carried away in three different captivities, so the people returned in three major movements. The first return was in 538 BC under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. This led to the rebuilding of the temple encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah in 520-516 BC.

The second return was led by Ezra in 458 BC.

The third and final return is documented in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah learned about the reproachful condition of Jerusalem from his brother Hanani and from other sources as he was able. (Neh. 1:2, 2:3). This caused him great distress of soul, and he went into mourning and fasting for many days. Nehemiah’s prayer mirrors Daniel’s in Daniel 9:1-19, and gives evidence of the strong spiritual character that guided him through life. Eventually the king observed his fallen countenance, and began to question the reasons for his sadness.

After an explanation and further negotiations, Nehemiah was appointed *tirshatha* (Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65,70; 8:9; 10:1) or governor of the province of Judah. He left with a strong escort supplied by the king in the spring of BC 445, thirteen years after Ezra first went to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:1,6).

Nehemiah took letters from the king that authorized him a safe passage and also permission for timber from the royal forests for the purpose of rebuilding the gates.

When Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem, he displayed great wisdom and leadership skills. In less than six months he had rallied the resources in Jerusalem to rise up and build the city wall (52 days for the wall Neh. 6:15). They then worked to rebuild all the gates. This was in the face of various forms of intimidation and political opposition.

After the wall project was finished, Nehemiah stayed on as governor for approximately thirteen years. He brought about many spiritual changes, working closely with Ezra.

After this first term of service, Nehemiah returned to Shushan for about two years (Neh. 13:6-7). The people seem to have quickly apostatized, and God raised

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up Malachi who sternly reproved them for their sins. When Nehemiah again returned to Judea, he found conditions deteriorating again. He responded with vigorous defense of the law of Moses.

Nehemiah seems to have had a different personality than Ezra or Malachi, but he worked well in a team. He was a man of courage, of action, and of great sacrifice. His physical attacks on apostates seem harsh, but reflect the sureness he felt in his cause (13:25). His prayer life of communion with God comes into focus, not only in the longer prayer asking for direction about God's will for his life, but in the prayers he interjected in his speech and work when he quickly sought direction in the face of great need.

We do not know much about Nehemiah's later years. He is thought he remained governor until his death about BC 412.

After Nehemiah, there were no more governors sent from Persia. Judah was added to another province. The High Priest was ruler of the land, but answered to a governor in Syria. The government seems to have become more and more a hierarchy.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are intertwined, even as Ezra and Nehemiah seemed to intertwine their lives. In the Jewish Tanakh the books are together as one. Ezra served as the priest and Nehemiah was the administrator, but they complemented one another as they led God's people physically, emotionally and spiritually back into a walk with God. The theological theme of Nehemiah is that God's people must be a separate people. In this way it contains very practical principles for the Christian worker today.

<i>Nehemiahs in the Bible - Jehovah comforts</i>
The son of Hachaliah, cupbearer to king Artaxerxes, who became governor of Judah after the return from exile
One of the 12 heads of the people who returned from exile with Zerubbabel Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7
A son of Azbuk and ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, who helped to repair the wall of Jerusalem Neh. 3:16

Dare to Do Right

Dare to do right! Dare to be true!
You have a work that no other can do,
Do it so bravely, so kindly, so well,
Angels will hasten the story to tell.

Dare to do right! Dare to be true!
Other men's failures can never save you;
Stand by your conscience, your honor, your faith;
Stand like a hero, and battle till death.

Dare to do right! Dare to be true!
God, who created you, cares for you too;
Treasures the tears that His striving ones shed,
Counts and protects every hair of your head.

Dare to do right! Dare to be true!
Keep the great judgement-seat always in view;
Look at your work as you'll look at it then —
Scanned by Jehovah, and angels, and men.

Dare to do right! Dare to be true!
Cannot Omnipotence carry you through?
City and mansion, and throne all in sight —
Can you not dare to be true and do right?

Dare to do right! Dare to be true!
Prayerfully, lovingly, firmly pursue
The path by apostles and martyrs once trod,
The path of the just to the city of God.
— George L. Taylor

Lesson 1

The Importance of Proper Vision

“...Send me...unto the city... that I may build it.”

The concept of “proper vision” establishes the core of personal life management. It implies there is a proper vision and an improper vision, and that the human will needs to make the choice of what the person will be.

This importance of personal choice is so elementary it is often overlooked. Most people want to have a well-ordered life. They admire people who choose the high road of character and integrity. They admire people who get their “ducks in a row.” They despise lives that are chaotic, sloth ridden or where instant gratification is the norm. But admiring the self disciplined and despising the selfish does not guarantee we will take responsibility for our lives.

It is human nature to escape personal responsibility, to blame others for failure and to waste passion on issues that do not bring eternal blessing.

Nehemiah is a man who plainly demonstrates what ordinary people can do who take responsibility for their actions and expect others to do the same. It is no doubt true that he had some personal gifts that you and I may not have. However, Nehemiah could have used the potential of those gifts and chosen a life of worldly success, wasted his resources or destroyed himself through self gratification.

Let’s study the choices Nehemiah made in his youth and see the platform that he laid for a life of godly personal life management.

Nehemiah 1:1-5

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province *are* in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted,

and prayed before the God of heaven,
5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

1. *Where we do we receive our first impression that Nehemiah had a passion for things that were beyond his personal pleasure?*

2. *What conditions existed in Jerusalem in at that time?*

3. *What was Nehemiah’s response when he learned of the state of Jerusalem and her people?*

Nehemiah 2:1-8

1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that wine was* before him: and I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence.

2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this *is* nothing *else* but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers’ sepulchres, that I may build it.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how

long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which *appertained* to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

4. *What was Nehemiah’s normal emotional state when he was in the King’s presence?*

5. *How did the King classify Nehemiah’s depression?*

6. *What did Nehemiah request from the king?*

7. *What were some factors that led the king to grant Nehemiah’s requests?*

The Principle of Proper Vision

1. Nehemiah’s proper vision began with a mind set of “I am responsible for the choices I make in life.”

We all struggle at times with the temptation that we could not help but do the wrong thing because so many circumstances were against us. When we have chosen to do wrong, we are tempted to blame others for our wrong choices. And as habits develop, we feel more and more trapped by patterns which we know are

not good for us.

The Bible is based on the premise that mankind is created as a creature of choice. He can choose to do right, yet he has the freedom to do wrong. During every temptation and before the decision to do right or wrong is a moment of choice when the will is exercised. This is the basis for the judgments that are promised at the end of life.

The world's value system attacks this principle. They continue to entertain the idea that people may make wrong choices because they could not help it. There is a tendency to confuse physical illness with moral choices.

At first we were told that emotional problems were "mental illness." This was contradicted by doctors and scientists who insisted the brain (outside of neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease etc.) cannot become sick. But because individuals would find themselves out of control and unable to bring themselves back from irrational choices, they are labeled as "sick." This way of thinking was reinforced when chemicals were discovered that seemed to suddenly correct these out of control situations.

Next alcoholism was labeled as a disease. Persons who were called "drunkards" before are now discovered to be self medicating. They have an illness, and alcohol is their medicine of choice. Little matter that the "medicine" obviously perpetuates and worsens the situation but does not solve the disease.

Energetic students with little self discipline are now given labels too. Various drugs are used to control them, even when it is known that the drug is only treating the symptom and not truly effecting a cure. Drugs become a way of life.

The mind set of blaming poor character choices on chemical imbalances seems to take be kind to the needy, but it creates the worst kind of trap a person can be in. If it is "not my fault" then I cannot choose to be something different. I am trapped. When I take responsibility, I am given the road to freedom. There are consequences for actions. I can choose to make the necessary choices today that will produce the results I desire tomorrow.

8. For each of the following vices, choose a virtue that would free an individual from habits of self destruction.

Laziness _____

Cheating _____

Procrastination _____

Eating for comfort _____

Belittling others _____

Lust _____

9. How should a teacher relate to parents who are not holding their child responsible for his behavior?

10. How does personal moral character affect a teacher's performance in the school room?

2. Nehemiah's proper vision came from the ability to analyze one's moral condition and see what one could become through proper choices.

One of the key elements of right choices is to envision or picture where one is and where he could be. (Fantasies and daydreams are the wrong exercise of this ability.) But to envision what a man of character would do under a certain situation of temptation or opportunity is a step in the right direction. Men of great achievement have often come from less than ideal settings and have chosen to rise far above their environment or home setting.

In a physical sense, one of the abilities that separates mankind from the animals is the ability to step out of oneself and picture what he looks like to others. Right now you have the ability to step up into the corner of the room and take an imaginary photo of what you look like sitting on your chair. You can "see" all your assets and blemishes that characterize what you look like.

In a spiritual sense or emotional sense each one of us can catch a vision of what we are presently and what we could become if we would exercise the higher calling we have. Paul speaks of having the "eyes of our understanding enlightened" (Eph. 1:18) and being "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

Teachers can help their students catch a vision of being something beyond themselves through deliberate teaching or by appealing to the imagination of their students. Some of our students live in settings that are far from ideal. They may have siblings that are choosing the deplorable course of the broad road of destruction. You may be the one to plant a noble calling in the child's imagination.

11. What kind of relationship will a teacher need to have with a child to be able to help replace an inferior mental image a child may have with a worthy calling?

12. What are some ways the teacher may plant a higher ideal in the child's impressionable mind?

3. Nehemiah's proper vision came from envisioning a long term worthy goal, marking out a course to accomplish this plan, and then disciplining himself to take one needful, sometimes even painful step after another.

Why did Nehemiah tackle the project of the wall? There are at least two reasons. Walls were needed in ancient cities to keep enemies out. This was for protection. Otherwise the enemy could sneak in at will to plunder and kill. The other reason was to keep God's people in. The Jews had increasingly mingled with foreigners and the holy seed and the holy faith were being corrupted. (See Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13).

After seeing what one can become there is often a long laborious road to reach a higher calling. It is the natural course of the undisciplined to scatter one's energies chasing after goals that do not fit in with the long term plan. In one's youth it is easy to feel there is plenty of time and energy to tackle the difficult dreams later.

Precious time is frittered away. "I'll be a writer some day" is pushed aside reading cheap and worthless stories. Years that should be spent in preparation for a calling through difficult training or study are wasted. Our narrow view of higher education may become an excuse for years wasted on the sole pursuit of financial gain.

A teacher plays a key role in helping an undisciplined child develop Nehemiah patterns. What child hasn't picked up a text book at the beginning of the school year and sighed with dismay at the lessons of the back. A wise teacher may capitalize on this. Lessons are divided into doable sessions. Enough work is given in each exercise to make sure the child masters the next concept. A little of the new is built upon what has already become familiar. With almost no foresight the child nears the end of the book and hardly even thinks of how he is now doing things he once thought impossible.

This is how man may accomplish difficult tasks. In school, the teacher and the curriculum provide the discipline from an external source. In life, unless one's vocation or job forces him to discipline himself, he will need to come up with internal discipline to achieve that which is worthwhile.

13. How does a teacher help a child grasp the concepts that self discipline and making consistent small achievements will enable one to reach a long-term goal?

14. How should a teacher master his own lack of self discipline when he senses his lack of focus is affecting his performance in the school room?

4. Nehemiah prevailed because he had a passion for the vision he embraced.

There is a difference in personalities. Some will be more intense, and others tend to be more laid back. But we all have passion for something.

Jesus taught us we cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24). Many persons never accomplish what God willed for their lives because they chase too many temporal rabbit trails.

The worst thing a man can do is confuse his soul with lustful pursuits (1Pet 2:11). These choices eventually disqualify one from the eternal prize and squander the gift of life.

Even neutral subjects like money, or mammon can keep us from worthy goals. Jesus made it plain that even though money is not sinful, pursuing it will prevent one from eternal goals when he makes them too high a priority. James also assures us that a man with divided loyalties will not receive anything from the Lord. (Jas 1:7)

Passion creates personal life management. Do not let it be divided.

15. Give some pointers how a person can develop and maintain a passion for the calling God has for him in life.

Conclusion

I am responsible for my choices. Much of what I am today is because I have chosen to be in this situation. I have made little choices regarding my health, my education, my emotional well being, and my finances. These little choices are the major factor in my current state. I can blame no one for where I am in life.

As I look into the future, I sense that God has a calling for me. I will take little steps today that are necessary to achieve that long term calling. I will pursue this calling with all the resources He chooses to give me. Moreover, I will not fret when He sends me obstacles, or chooses to withhold resources, because God uses those obstructions and hurdles to produce maturity in my life if I will let Him. His way will be my way.

Lesson 2

The Importance of Organization

“I even set the people after their families with their spears, and their bows.”

Nehemiah is an outstanding example of what one man can accomplish by understanding and applying principles of organization. Do not be deceived, organization is not just a gift that some people have and other people can never achieve. Organization follows specific patterns, and when a person seriously applies himself, he too will accomplish more. This is an important second element of personal life management.

Nehemiah’s organization raised the morale. A raised morale gave the people a mind to work. This raised the morale even more. It is impossible to place a price tag on how valuable organization is.

The Book of Proverbs highlights the fact that diligence, prudence and wisdom are character traits. The simple man, the foolish man and the scorner waste their resources and their lives because they do not seek to grasp the wisdom that “crieth without” (Pro 1:20). Wisdom has been defined as the “ability that God gives man to work out a harmonious relationship with himself, his fellow man and his environment.”

The main scope of this lesson encompasses just fifty-two days. When Nehemiah arrived, the Jews had been released from captivity for approximately ninety years. What made the difference between the first ninety years and the next fifty two days? We have no record that Nehemiah brought a team of wall builders along. He did not bring a fresh technique to quarrying stones. He did not have any new technology, but he brought organization. Same old stones. Same old people. Same old challenges. But when he was finished they had a brand-new wall and a brand new morale.

You and your students are called to a task. Let us see if we can grasp some of the principles that made Nehemiah an effective organizer for the Kingdom of God.

Nehemiah 2:9-20

Proper authorization

9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

Careful planning

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

13 And I went out by night by the gate

of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king’s pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass.

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Communication

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Separation from detractors

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants

will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

1. What authorization had the king given to Nehemiah?

2. How do you think the midnight journey helped Nehemiah with organization?

3. Who came up with the inspiration to rebuild the wall?

4. How did Nehemiah handle the antagonism of his opponents?

Nehemiah 3:1-7

Delegating the work

1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

3 But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

4 And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the

son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana.

5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

6 Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river.

5. *What human tendency surfaced with the Tekoites in verse 5?*

Nehemiah 4:7-23

Dependency upon God

7 But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

Fear relieved through night watches

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in

the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

Forewarned and Prepared

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

Division of labor, creating specialists

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Judah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

Communication system

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work *is* great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

Time Schedule and Logistics

21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.

23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that* every one put them off for washing.

6. *V13 How do you think Nehemiah was able to create steward delegates over the various sections of the wall and have them labor so industriously?*

7. *In verse 17 we have an illustration of responding to issues that are important and issues that are urgent. Which tool represented an important work? Which tool represented an urgent work?*

8. *Working from dawn to dusk may be considered an example of crisis management. How do we know*

Nehemiah did not operate in crisis management most of the time?

9. *What were some ways that Nehemiah created as much of a stress free environment as possible so the workers could concentrate better on their tasks?*

Nehemiah 7:1-6

1 Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed,

2 That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he *was* a faithful man, and feared God above many.

3 And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar *them*: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one *to be* over against his house.

4 Now the city *was* large and great: but the people *were* few therein, and the houses *were* not builded.

5 And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,

6 These *are* the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar

the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;

10. What qualities did Hananiah, Nehemiah's brother have that caused Nehemiah to delegate authority to him?

11. How was registering the nobles, rulers and people by genealogy an important step in organizing the city in its rebuilding efforts?

Principles of Organization

1. Before we will be effective in organization, we must appreciate the place that authority fills, and we must choose to be willing to take the place where we are called to serve.

God is a God of order. There is authority and headship in the Trinity (1Cor 11:3). There is authority structure in the angelic world (2Pet 2:11). There is authority structure in the civil authority (Rom 13:1-6). There is to be headship in the home (1Cor 11:3). There is to be authority structure in the church (Titus 1:5). For you to be effective in the school you will need to take your place under the school board and over the students trusted into your care.

It is a prideful root in a teacher's life that leads him to resent the school board, principal and other authority structures such as the schedule system. If not dealt with, this pride will lead to a breakdown in relationships. Pride grows into a person under authority beginning to work against his authority rather than with it.

It may be tempting for a teacher to adopt the mentality that it is humility to be a buddy or friend to his students. This is a false humility. You are called to be an authority figure. You should be friendly, but not a friend in that you do special favors for certain individuals.

Jesus' teaching regarding humility in leadership was never intended to be understood that He was against authority and leadership. He taught servant hood in leadership. Servant hood leads is for the good of the subjects. Lordship exercises itself for the benefits of the lord.

As a teacher, you are called to lead out, but it is all about serving the students and helping them grow intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. You are not in the classroom to feed your ego.

It is important that you soon stop listening for complements and brooding over put downs. You are called to serve under authority and in authority because there is an important work that needs to be done.

12. Explain how a proper understanding of and respect for authority is one of the basic steps for true organization.

13. How can one take authority over others and still not feel superior to them?

2. Forethought and planning are an essential part of organization.

Perhaps here is the place to introduce an integral concept that will helps us think deeper about how we spend our time.

We all find ourselves doing things that are important and things that are not important. We also find ourselves doing things that are urgent and things that are not urgent. A combination of these two creates the following quadrant:

	URGENT — What we react to	NOT URGENT — What we must choose to act upon
Important	Quadrant 1 (the symptom quadrant) Activities Crises Pressing Problems Deadline Projects Results Stress Crisis Management Always running around putting out fires	Quadrant 2 (the cure quadrant) Activities Prevention Relationships, family life Opportunity focus Planning Results Vision Perspective Balance Control, minimal crises
	Quadrant 3 (the deceptive quadrant) Activities Interruptions Some mail, phone calls Some meetings Popular activities Results Short term focus Crisis Management Victimized, out of control Chameleon character Shallow, broken relationships	Quadrant 4 (the waste quadrant) Activities Trivia Mail Some phone calls Pleasant relaxing activities Results Total irresponsibility Fires from jobs Dependent on others or institutions

Taking time to think through how we want to plan a project is not a "must do" or urgent activity. It is something that seems like it can be done at any time. It is also not something that happens by itself. This puts it in the quadrant 2 sphere.

Persons who operate with crisis management as a way of life often over look this important step. They think they will figure things out as they go. Then when things begin to go wrong, or do not hold out, then people begin to lose confidence. Good projects can begin to die on their own.

Nehemiah took a nighttime walk. He thought deeply about the work he felt a calling to. While he may have never heard the old adage, "plan your work and then work your plan", he certainly operated that way.

14. What did going out at night give Nehemiah the opportunity to do?

15. How might getting involved in the wall building project too quickly have ended up hindering the work?

3. Nehemiah also employed the principle of creating steward delegates to accomplish the task of rebuilding the wall.

It was obvious to Nehemiah that he would not be able to build the wall by himself. He was a cupbearer, not a stone mason. He had wealth, but not a fortune so vast that he could hire the work to be done at his expense. He simply could not do it alone. But how could he fulfill his calling?

Nehemiah chose to turn the whole community into stewards who with very few exceptions threw themselves into laying up stones for the wall.

Nehemiah began with his vision. Then he went to community leaders and communicated how God was moving in his heart, and how the king had given his endorsement to the project. We don't know when Nehemiah shared his plan of families dividing out the work, but apparently (according to Nehemiah 4:13) this is how the project was approached.

The men saw the benefits at the end of the project and felt they had someone who would help them see it through. They entered into the work.

16. What are some issues that will need to be settled in a person's mind before they will willingly enter into a project a leader may propose?

4. Nehemiah understood the importance of meeting urgent dangers without sacrificing long term important work.

Earlier we dealt with quadrants related to work that is urgent and work that is important. This is an important part of organization. It is so easy to deal with the immediate pressures that we neglect to invest in the long term projects that will ultimately bring the greatest rewards.

The enemy was pressing upon them to stop them from building the wall. Nehemiah could have ignored the danger and insisted the workers keep at their work. But he was realistic. He saw there would be bloodshed if the men did not arm themselves and prepare to fight.

Nehemiah successfully faced the temptation of procrastination and crisis management. He did not wait to arm the men until the enemy was at his door. They were prepared. Neither did they allow this enemy threat to stop them from the daunting task of wall building. Nehemiah and his enemies knew the threat would be valid only as long as there was no wall. Once the wall was completed, it would take only a few guards to protect the gates.

There are so many issues that if taken care of promptly actually save work. Procrastination is defined as putting off important issues because they are not urgent. Then when they become urgent, the crisis management takes over. Procrastination and crisis management generates waste in both time and materials, which in turn causes people to lose interest in the project.

Teachers need to discipline themselves to look at their long term goals in the classroom. Do you want to assign book reports or special projects. Mark these

things down and decide before hand when the announcements will be made and what will be the progress at various dates before the deadline arrives. Is there an unruly child who is taking a downhill course. Do not procrastinate until you suddenly have a serious issue to address. Take care of the incidentals. External direction will prevent a situation that escalates out of control.

Help your students develop the same habits. Teach them how to use assignment books, and then work at assignments long before they become due. Help students realize the peace that comes when one controls his schedule instead of having it control him.

17. How is having a fire extinguisher along in your car similar to Nehemiah having his men carry weapons along with their trowels?

5. Nehemiah understood the importance of keeping after details that give persons a sense of order, security and purpose.

Do the details really matter? Does it matter if broken windows are not repaired right away? Will it hurt if school property is damaged and it is not kept after? Does it really matter if a child is tardy and you fail to record it? Why worry if assignments come in late and/or the work is not all completed?

The Jews needed to keep after genealogical records in order to confirm the prophetic lineage of the Messiah. They needed to know the true Levitical line so their worship could be legitimate. But more than that, each person is important. They need to know they count. It sends the signal that someone will care for you if you have a need. When people are significant, their behavior is considerably better.

We know when communities keep after the graffiti they can keep other petty crime in check much better. When things are left go, it takes much more government to control it all.

The same is true in the school room. Teachers who do not want to keep after the little misdeeds will soon have to deal with larger issues. When school work is overlooked, then assignments are going to be half done and learning suffers.

Everyone benefits when standards are kept high. It takes may take more effort, but when we serve souls and our goal is eternity, then it is worth the effort.

18. What are some practical ways teachers can send signals of order and control that discourage the wayward from leading the classroom into chaos and anarchy?

19. Why do students appreciate a well ordered classroom where diligence is expected better than a disorderly atmosphere?

Conclusion

Much of my success in a work is determined by my commitment to organization.. I will respect the principle of authority, whether it is honor for those over me, or taking leadership responsibilities given to me. I can and will order my private world.

I will endeavor to train stewards to also take up the work. I realize the work is greater than my abilities. I will endeavor to make wise use of my free time to do things that are important rather than wait until there is a crisis and we lose productivity.

Lesson 3

Proper Response to Opposition and Difficulty

“Should such a man as I flee?”

As soon as Nehemiah began to do the Lord’s work, the enemy set out to stop him. He also found out it wasn’t only the heathen who would oppose him, his own high priest was involved in two different alliances that severely tested Nehemiah.

Ask any leader or person involved in serving the Lord what his most difficult issue is. A large percentage of the time you will find out he is struggling with how to deal with criticism or opposition from others.

The issue is of criticism is one that needs balance. In Proverbs 9:8 we are told “...rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” Reproof and correction are good for us because we all need to grow. We cannot see our flat spots, and correction has a way of humbling us. It will also purge us if we will receive it (Heb 12:11). We must see God’s hand in the disciplines we receive or we will be like illegitimate children, undisciplined and spoiled (Heb 12:8).

On the other hand, if a person does not learn to properly relate to criticism, whether just or unjust, it will consume his energy and bring his productivity to a standstill. If he takes criticism personally, he may become bitter and withdraw. There have been many sad cases of great men involved in noble causes who became obsessed with the criticisms they faced and lost their focus.

Nehemiah related well to the opposition and difficulty he faced. It did not make him bitter, it made him better and he overcame it. He clearly identified with principle and forged ahead with his calling.

Accepting Correction

Nehemiah 1:6-7

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the

commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

Nehemiah 5:9-10

9 Also I said, *It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?*

10 I likewise, *and* my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.

1. *In what areas did Nehemiah admit he was not perfect, seek forgiveness and change his ways?*

Resisting Opposition and Difficulty

Nehemiah 2:10

When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard *of it*, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

2. *What was the underlying reason why Sanballat had a grudge against Nehemiah?*

Nehemiah 2:19-20

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *it*, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, *What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?*

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

3. *What was the first form of opposition that Nehemiah faced?*

4. *The old saying goes something like, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never harm me.” Is this true? Explain.*

Nehemiah 4:1-6

1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, *What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?*

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, *Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*

4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders.

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

5. *What elements of harassment were in the second mocking that were not in the first?*

Nehemiah 4:7-9

7 But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, 8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to

fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

6. *What evidence do we have that the Jews believed their enemies might actually come with physical force against them?*

Nehemiah 4:11-15

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

7. *What precautions did the Jews take to ensure their safety on the construction project?*

Nehemiah 6:1-19

1 Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and *that* there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in *some one of* the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

6 Wherein *was* written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith *it, that* thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is* a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

10 Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being* as I *am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

13 Therefore *was* he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* Elul, in fifty and two days.

16 And it came to pass, that when all

our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that *were* about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto T o b i a h , and *the letters* of Tobiah came unto them.

18 For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he *was* the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

8. *What techniques did Nehemiah's opponents use to try to stop the progress in verses 2-4?*

In verses 6-9?

In verses 10-11?

9. *What conclusion did the enemies reach when all their tactics failed to hinder Nehemiah and his builders of the wall?*

The Principle of Responding Properly to Opposition and Difficulty
1. Nehemiah understood that a wise man will hearken to counsel and reproof and mend his ways.

Each of us has the temptation to pride and selfishness. We do not like to be told where we are wrong. It is difficult for us to face where we may have sinned.

If someone corrects us, we are tempted to regard them as an enemy, an opponent.

We all need people to surround us. From our friends, we receive great comfort and encouragement. From those who would criticize us, we can receive growth. But how much we grow is determined by how mature we are and how well we listen to others.

Teachers face special challenges because they constantly live in the public eye. Almost everything they do in the classroom is under public scrutiny. Add to this the fact that many decisions must be made on the spur of the moment.

Some teachers begin from the position that they must be regarded as nearly perfect in order to preserve their image. They will not accept correction or criticism from their students.

This position is dangerous. Instead, it is better to hold truth, facts, law and logic as the highest standard. Invite students to test you by these points. When someone points out a misspelled word or a wrong answer, thank them, correct it and do your best to be right the next time.

Another difficult source of criticism is from parents and school board. We want people to be impressed by our performance, and it hurts enough when we don't receive the encouragements we feel we deserve. Much less when the criticisms begin to come our way. Again, it is extremely important to be humble enough to stay objective. Do not let your emotions keep you from properly analyzing the situation. Listen to the criticism. Restate it in your own words so the person knows you heard and understood. Assure the person you will give it close consideration and pray about it too.

10. What is the reason why we resent being shown where we have been wrong or could have done better?

11. What three things should be the highest standard in the school room and not the whim of the teacher?

12. What is lost when a teacher refuses to accept criticism or correction?

2. Nehemiah did not allow the opposition and intimidation of the enemy from leading the people in the calling God had for them.

Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem scorned Nehemiah because they despised what he stood for. He had a calling from God and a work to do for God's people. They did little to disguise their motives. They came with outright intimidation.

We expect people from the world to oppose our goals and what we do to

achieve those goals. We do not believe in the god of higher education, and refuse to sacrifice our children to it. We do not believe in the god of sports, and refuse to allow our children to be trapped by its wiles. We do not believe in self expression, moral liberties, patriotism, population control, fashion, materialism, humanism, and many other gods at whose feet this world worships.

This refusal to be acclimated into society's pursuits brings opposition in subtle forms. Most of our society has come to accept Mennonite as a culture. It is when we face some "Christian" who wants to claim we are all the same yet rejects the Truth of the Scripture that the sparks fly.

It is easy for us to feel inferior because we do not have the polish and self confidence that others may have. While we may be inferior (and that we will not deny), our cause is just. Nehemiah's people needed a physical wall in their day. We have as much need for a wall of Truth and pure doctrine to keep out the enemy philosophies and keep ourselves and our youth within safe perimeters today.

13. What are some areas where the Sanballats attack the Bible way of living today?

14. What are some ways to overcome unfair opposition and have it make us more useable in God's kingdom?

3. Nehemiah refused to acquiesce even when the attack became personal and he was falsely accused of having selfish motives.

When the opponents see there is a Biblical basis for our doctrines, the next step often is an attack against us personally. Perhaps our past performances come into focus. We may be assigned motives unfairly. Nehemiah was accused that he had hired prophets to preach that he should be king! What could have been more absurd!

At times our opponents will genuinely believe their false accusations against us. They may see an illustration of their concern here, add another case from there and come up with what appears to them to be a full proof of our unworthiness to lead out. For the moment they cannot see the beam in their own eye and find an unholy fascination with the splinter we have.

This kind of opposition is difficult to overcome because it seems wrong to defend oneself. When a student attacks the teacher, or when a church member attacks a church leader, we are tempted with a false humility. We feel it is better to suffer unjustly than to defend ourselves.

What must be done is to divide between the cause and anything that might be said about us personally. We know our own lives and whether or not we have lived as hypocrites or have had failures. Wherein we have failed let us bravely own up

to it. Nothing can clear the air like honest confession.

Where the accusations are untrue we still must retain our love for the accuser. Still we must choose not to back off in the cause. We will finally stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ and there we will be judged for what we have done, even how we handled criticism.

15. How can we determine whether something leveled against us personally is an unfair attack or something we should hearken to and benefit from?

4. Nehemiah resisted the paralysis of fear and continued to do what was right even in the midst of threats of physical harm.

When we dwell on fears, we may waste a tremendous amount of mental energy on nonproductive thought processes. The enemy of our soul realizes this. He does not have to stop us with facts if he can stop us with fears.

We need to learn the skill of disciplining the mind, of directing the thought processes. There are many outside circumstances we can do little about. But we can control what we mull over, what we fantasize about and dwell on. The New Testament uses the word “sober” and “moderation” to command us to develop this virtue. This word directs us to be moderate as to opinion and passion. We can choose what we think about.

Nehemiah found that he could control the fears his enemy wished to plant in his mind by concentrating on the calling God had for him. The work demanded one more step forward. This step required a great deal of foresight.

Here is productive thinking. Concentrate on the task at hand. Think of how to best do what is waiting to be done. In the process, self and its fears are forgotten and begin to fade. There is plenty of time to think about how to face crises when they arise. At the moment of need, God will give wisdom and enablement to those whose minds are stayed on him.

16. How can we stop a racing mind that embraces worst case scenarios and dwells on fears?

Conclusion

As long as I am in this flesh, I will need correction and criticism. I need to develop the discipline of hearkening to counsel because wisdom crieth without. I was not born with an innate goodness that can guide me, because my heart is desperately wicked and my understanding is corrupted.

I do have a calling to fulfill. I must choose not to allow criticism and opposition cannot derail me from doing God’s will. If I fail to do well the task God has called me to, then I have a serious reckoning day ahead. I will not allow disagreements, personal attacks or fears to swerve me from serving God.

Lesson 4

The Importance of Brotherly Commitment

*“Think upon me, my God, for good,
according to all that I have done for this people.”*

Nehemiah’s life revolved around a commitment to his people, the Jews. In his mind they constituted the work that God was doing in his generation. He did not see himself as the center of the universe. He was but a small part of a larger project that God had. God’s people as a whole represent God’s kingdom on this earth.

A lot may be said for achieving independence. As babies we were completely dependent upon our mothers for survival. When we cried, they came to serve us. In our childish selfishness, we were not surprised that she made us the center of her world. We expected that. That kind of relationship could not exist indefinitely.

As we grew older, most of us began to regard our dependency upon our mothers as stifling. We subconsciously began to see independence as the ideal existence. We want dependence as long as it serves our needs, but then we crave independence for its freedom and pleasure to satisfy our wants.

Independence is still selfish, and as it is selfish, it does not really satisfy. Find me a person who has the liberty to do as he pleases, and unless he uses those liberties to serve others, I will show you a very unhappy person.

Nehemiah’s life illustrates the blessings of a greater maturity and satisfaction than independence, the blessing of interdependence. He had great resources, but he did not spend them on his own pleasure or flaunt them before others. He had talents, but he did not use them to climb the ladder of success in Persia. He mingled his gifts and energies with a group to build a wall in the obscure land of Judea. Nehemiah had caught an eternal vision.

America flaunts liberty and independence as the epitome of success. We and our young people are not immune to the siren song promoted around us. Why do people leave the church and heritage of their fathers? Why do people refuse to serve the church in the obscure calling of the school room? Is it not far better to obey the laws of God. Is it not infinitely more satisfying to serve our fellow man?

The emphasis more traditional groups place on brotherhood and commitment to the church is not all bad. When taken up because of spiritual vision and selflessness, it is the way to have eternal purpose and significance.

As a teacher you have the opportunity to live the vision of brotherhood commitment. In subtle ways you can plant this commitment into the minds of your students.

Nehemiah 2:17-18

17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

1. *Explain how the absent wall illustrates the loss of identity and loss of brotherhood?*

2. *What reputation did this condition give them to their enemies?*

Nehemiah 5:1-19

1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, *are* many: therefore we take up corn *for them*, that we may eat, and live.

3 *Some* also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.

4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king’s tribute, *and that upon* our lands and vineyards.

5 Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and *some* of our daughters

are brought unto bondage *already*: neither *is it* in our power to *redeem them*; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing *to answer*.

9 Also I said, *It is* not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?

10 I likewise, *and* my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.

11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth *part* of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

12 Then said they, We will restore *them*, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.

13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and

praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

3. *How did the condition of charging the poor interest and defrauding them of their inheritance illustrate the loss of sense of brotherhood in Judea?*

14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.

15 But the former governors that *had been* before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work.

17 Moreover *there were* at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that *are* about us.

18 Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily was one ox *and* six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

19 Think upon me, my God, for good, *according* to all that I have done for this people.

4. *Do you think Nehemiah made these*

sacrifices for political reasons? Explain your answer.

Nehemiah 11:1-2

1 And the rulers of the people dwell at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts *to dwell* in other cities.

2 And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

5. *What other brotherhood concepts were spurred on by Nehemiah's example?*

Nehemiah 13:1-14

1 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;

2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, *was* allied unto Tobiah:

5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was

commanded *to be given* to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

6 But in all this *time* was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king:

7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.

8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.

9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.

10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. 11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

12 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries.

13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them *was* Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office *was* to distribute unto their brethren.

14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

6. *What was the great common ground that kept bringing the Jews to appreciate each other as a brotherhood?*

7. *What special place did Eliashib fill that made a confrontation with Tobiah a highly charged situation?*

15 In those days saw I in Judah *some* treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all *manner of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified *against* them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing *is* this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

20 So the merchants and sellers of all

kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do *so* again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no *more* on the sabbath.

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come *and* keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

8. *How did rebuilding the wall contribute to a more conscientious observance of the law?*

9. *What were the workmen and merchants saying about their personal self image by going on with their work on the Sabbath?*

23 In those days also saw I Jews *that* had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, *and* of Moab:

24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many

nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

28 And *one* of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, *was* son in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;

31 And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

10. *What reaping did Nehemiah envision for his people as long as they continued to intermarry with the heathen?*

11. *How do we know Nehemiah felt deeply about these involvements?*

12. *What place is there for display of anger when we are disturbed by carnal or sinful actions?*

The Principle of Commitment to the Brotherhood

1. Nehemiah had a vision for personal identification with the people of God.

It is said of Moses that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Nehemiah shared that same vision. We do not know what kind of life would have been in store for Nehemiah had he remained in Shushan. We may be certain he would have never have reaped the honor and satisfaction he received by building the wall. Nor would he have received eternal rewards he presently receives and shall receive for all eternity by a relatively short time of suffering in Judea.

Sacrificing to serve Gods' people is the highest form of delayed gratification. Some folks would have us feel guilty if we invest lifetime energies so we can reap heaven and eternal rewards. However, this is the incentive that Jesus placed before us. Do not live for selfish pleasure and immediate gain, but lay up treasure in heaven for more rewards later (Mat 6:20).

There is no greater investment that a person can make than the investment into the Church of Jesus Christ. Teachers need to understand the important eternal contribution they are making, and communicate that vision to their students.

12. *What are some ways of stimulating an appreciation for serving the people of God and winning souls of unbelievers among our school age students?*

13. *What are some pointers in maintaining a balance in Christian service for rewards versus out of love for the Master?*

2. Nehemiah's vision and brotherhood commitment were contagious to others.

As people we tend to follow others who will lead. Children and youth continually seek for people to look up to and follow. When the Church can set role models before the youth who are of sterling quality, there is a tremendous momentum built.

You may not think you are leaving an influence today, and it probably is not the best to spend too much time thinking about it. But when you are tempted in a down moment to compromise your standards, think about how much can be lost in a moment of folly and how much is gained by faithfulness.

Much of the influence is never perceived by the person who is being the example. Think of the persons who influenced you the most. Did they ever find out how much you influenced them?

We need to be zealous in the choices of heroes we set before our children. The

world has its stars; in their movies, in their music and in their sports. When these stars get the attention of our youth they will leave an influence in subtle ways. When our children have Anabaptist missionaries and martyrs for their heroes, when they have deep friendship and respect for those who are living for eternal values, then the battle for their souls is much easier.

14. How can we choose role models for our children?

15. What should be a teacher's response if it is discovered that one of the students carries a photo of a rock star or other worldly celebrity in his possession?

3. Nehemiah was not afraid to implement changes, even sacrificing relationships if necessary to be in harmony with God's Word and to protect God's people from worldly accommodations.

The issue of having concerns for the way a group is traveling has different levels.

The first level is if a person even cares. It is a matter of great value to have concerns about the direction a church group is traveling. Many youth have no sense of context and the terrible loss when a group of youth begins to follow worldly influences. When a person wants to gratify his base passions, he subconsciously appreciates a group that is relaxing mores and choosing sensual pleasures.

It is another level though to care enough to choose high moral standards for oneself. There are persons who succumb to outward morality and concerns as a cloak for their own sins. They would take splinters out of eyes of others and the whole time travel around with a beam in their own eye. Some of these people gravely share their concerns to the church. Meanwhile, behind their backs the youth are snickering. They know it is all a front. Hypocrisy permeates the atmosphere like the odor of an unwashed body.

If we would be effective in stemming the tide of liberal, world-ward or immoral tendencies, we need to first draw the line with ourselves. We need to know the Biblical basis for our practice and practice what we preach.

After building all this foundation, the final level is to then teach and when possible exert outward influences to confront sinful practices. One of the challenges comes when we realize that practicing Truth means we will need to confront a formidable or authoritarian personality. Nehemiah needed to face his high priest and risk his displeasure.

A teacher, even in the lower grades is in a position to confront practices and trends in the rising generation. Some of us remember the lectures from teachers we revered, and because we had learned to appreciate the character they displayed, we

came to love their passionate stand against apostasy.

Now it is our turn to confront challenges. Let us help our girls to develop convictions against makeup and jewelry, against manicured eyebrows and coverings that are dropping off the back of the head, against sack type dresses with sash belts and immodest appearance. Let us help our young boys develop convictions against baggy street kid trousers and pullover shirts, against gangster styled street cars or ego stroking pickups, against country or contemporary music.

If our church will be destroyed in our generation it does not seem it will be from threats of martyrdom and persecution, but of assimilation and acculturation. If we will be Nehemiah's of our day our work is waiting to be done.

16. How quick should teachers be to speak out against concerns if the ministry and parents do not seem to be taking hold?

17. Why would someone have grave concerns about the direction they perceive of apostasy in the church and yet live with sin in their lives?

Conclusion

I must see the church as being Christ's favorite prize on earth. I will retain eternal identity and purpose only as I serve the visible body here. I will invest my energies in synergism, in interdependence, and resist my temptations to autonomy or self government. Not only will I ask myself the question, "Is this good for my eternal well being?" but also, "Is this good for the Church, the body of Christ?"

I will use my influence to bring revival and continued separation from the world into my classroom and with my students. Through God's direction and blessing, like Nehemiah I can make a difference for eternity.

Lesson 5

Securing Divine Protection and Blessing

"...Our God shall fight for us..."

In our last lesson in learning from Nehemiah's life we turn our attention to one of the most important personal life management concepts, enablement from above. Every human has limitations. Our God's resources are inexhaustible. Only those who have chosen a life of discipleship to Christ may claim His promises.

God will give wisdom to those who ask for it (Jas 1:5). God will carry our cares and provide solutions for our problems (1Pe 5:7). God will give grace to enable us to face any test (Jas 4:6, 2Cor 12:9). God's promises will enable us to be partakers of His divine nature and free us from the corruption of lusts (2Pet 1:4). God will give us answers when we are put to the test (Mat 10:19). We have the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures which give us comfort and direction in every test. The child of God has enablement that simply is not available for any other person, regardless of personal wealth or status in life.

Since all of the above are true statements then the child of God finds life simple and easy, right?

No. In fact we have more tests than the ordinary person because we have an adversary. It takes great humility to tap into the power sources that are available from God, and great discipline to maintain a walk overflowing with wisdom and grace.

In this lesson it is our goal to discover what Nehemiah did to find God's grace and wisdom to guide his life through grueling times. It is our commitment to employ these same methods in our walk today.

Prayer

Nehemiah 1:5-11

5 And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against

thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:*

9 But *if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the*

uttermost part of the heaven, *yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.*

10 Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

1. *V5 What benefit is there in rehearsing God's great attributes in our prayers?*

2. *What benefit is there in going over our needs to a God who already knows how needy we are?*

3. *What indications do we have that Nehemiah tapped into the resource of constant communion and fellowship with God?*

Nehemiah's Prayers

1:5-11	Of penitence and direction
2:4	For help to answer the king
4:4-5	For help against Tobiah's insults
4:9	For protection against physical harm
5:19	For God's remembrance for personal sacrifices
6:9	For strength against false accusations
6:14	For courage against opponents of the work
8:6	Ezra's prayer
9:4-38	The Levites' prayer
13:14	For remembrance for good deeds
13:22	For remembrance for bringing revival
13:29	For punishment for those who defiled the priesthood
13:31	For remembrance for sacrifices

Bible Reading

Nehemiah 8:1-10

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their faces* to the ground.

7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah,

Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place.

8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, which *is* the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day *is* holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

4. What indications do we have that the people held great respect for the reading of God's word?

5. What place does mourning and repentance fill in our lives after hearing the Word read?

6. What place is joy and rejoicing to fill in our lives?

Repentance and Restitution

Nehemiah 9:1-4

1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

4 Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

7. What were some actions that went along with repentance that communicated sincerity?

8. What part did separating from strangers play in coming to true repentance and revival?

Nehemiah 10:29-39

29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes;

30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons:

31 And *if* the people of the land bring

ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God;

33 For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy *things*, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and *for* all the work of the house of our God.

34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring *it* into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as *it is* written in the law:

35 And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:

36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as *it is* written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God:

37 And *that* we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of

our tillage.

38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithes of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.

39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

9. *What were some of the changes the children of Israel committed*

themselves to in their revival.

10. *V32, What did the people do in order to make sure that none of the laws of God would be neglected?*

The Principle of Securing Divine Enablement

1. Nehemiah understood the importance of prayer as a means of finding one's way through perplexities in life.

It can seem so useless to pray. God already knows everything about our troubles so what is the benefit to tell Him. It seems like some things in life won't change anyway. God respects the human will. If people want to do wrong, He won't stop them. He is not a master magician that will jump whenever we snap our fingers. So why pray?

Prayer does move the heart of God, and prayer does ultimately change things. But most of all, prayer changes us. As we pray our hearts calm and our tensions subside. Our blood pressure drops. We find solutions we never dreamed of before. Prayer reminds us of people who need a personal touch. Relationships are rebuilt and maintained. We find the courage to hang on even when there are no solutions.

Fervency in prayer depends upon humility and helplessness. When we have answers we think we don't have the time to cry out to God. We think we will find the answers in ourselves. We make snap decisions. Sometimes those decisions cause us to waste years of our lives. We hurt feelings and tangle relationships that take hours to untangle. As we age we look back and realize that so much more could have been accomplished by simply taking time to pray about everything.

11. *What essential element must reside in the heart for a person to pray?*

12. *Is there any benefit in taking time to pray when one doesn't feel like it?*

2. Nehemiah knew the place that Bible reading accomplishes in the life of God's people.

The Scripture speaks about the man who doesn't have time to sharpen his iron (axe or saw) but in the end needs to exert much more energy to get the same job accomplished (Ecc 10:10). Many people feel they don't have time to read their Bible. Ask any group of Mennonites how many of the audience know they have ever read the entire Bible from cover to cover and very few hands will go up. Ask a group how many read it every year, or are in the practice of reading it through on a regular basis, and the results are even weaker. There simply isn't time to read the Bible so thoroughly and there are more important things to do.

The Bible teaches us that faith cometh by hearing (Rom 10:17). It also teaches us that taking the Scriptures into our hearts imparts illumination to the soul (Ps 119:30). It teaches us the Old Testament accounts are written for our reproof, to keep us from making the mistakes so often repeated by mankind (1Cor 10:11). Reading the Bible reorients us, gives us patience and hope (Rom 15:4).

The Bible teaches that Bible preaching is God's method of saving souls (1Cor 1:21). Careful study, teaching and continuing in the Word will save both the preacher and his audience (1Tim 4:16).

Drama, skits, special singing, and other spiritual entertainments will never accomplish what the simple reading and explanation of the Holy Word of God does.

In our day of time consciousness, we need to deliberately choose our priorities, and high on our priority list must be the non-negotiable commitment to read God's Word.

13. *How can teachers communicate the special place that Bible Reading has for the disciple of Christ?*

14. *What place should teachers fill in helping their students come to a decision to be a disciple of Christ?*

3. Nehemiah knew that time and resources given to God are not wasted, but are an investment that express true personal life management.

Jesus raised the question, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the

whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mt 16:26). The absolute greatest waste of a life, of time and finances is for a soul to be consigned to eternity separated from God.

Using this premise on a micro scale, the greatest waste of a day is to gain part of the world, and lose a little of one's soul. Every day is a step in one direction.

Giving a tithe of one's income, even a teacher's income is an eternal investment. Being a part of a Biblically obedient brotherhood is an eternal investment. Churches that make ordinances to charge ourselves (Neh 10:33) to put into practices God's laws are a part of eternal investments.

In return, God is able to give the wisdom for daily duties and make one's life increase with true riches. God gives man the wisdom to know how to prepare the ground for sowing and which instrument to use in reaping (See Isa 28:23-29) "For his God doth instruct him to discretion, *and* doth teach him." (Isa 28:26) God is the One who chooses whom to burden with wealth. (De 8:18)

These concepts must be riveted again and again into our thinking. We tend to feel money spent on God, Church and souls is wasted. We must choose to see it otherwise.

15. *How might the new commitment to provide items, foodstuffs and funding for the temple actually have increased the wealth of the Jews?*

16. *What is the greatest test of personal life management principles?*

Conclusion

I often trust in my own strength and do not feel the need to pray and read my Bible, but I know these feelings are false. Through spiritual choices I will refuse feed my soul and cast my cares on God.

I will fulfill the spiritual commitments asked of me, whether in finances, relationships, clothing or recreation. I know God never asks for something without giving a rich reward.

In the end, I desire to use eternity to give to God even in a more perfect way all of my life, love and loyalty.