

12 Key Apostolic Principles Nehemiah Used for Restoration

The book of Nehemiah is an outstanding book that depicts going from a compelling vision to its activation and implementation. Nehemiah was a type of a master builder apostle (1 Cor. 3:10-14) who knew how to utilize teams, motivate the masses, and bring commitment through conviction. His leadership ability resulted in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and—important for us—his methods can be replicated.

The following are some of the key apostolic principles he used:

1. He assessed the true conditions of his people and nation (Neh. 1:1-3). Many people are delusional or in denial regarding the true state of their nation, church and community. Leadership involves bringing self awareness to those under their care and influence. Without knowing the truth, there can never be a path to true freedom (John 8:32-46).

2. He was moved inwardly and received a compelling vision to meet the need (Neh. 1:4). All leadership is driven and motivated by vision. All true vision must emanate from the heart and have passion. Vision merely articulated via strategy on paper is never enough. Spirit-inspired passion is the engine that drives heaven-sent vision.

3. He prayed his vision through before he attempted to implement it (1:4-11). Godly leadership is a partnership with the divine, since we are living both on the Earth and in heavenly places (Eph. 2:4-6). Like Nehemiah, today's leaders must pray their vision through in the Spirit before attempting to implement it in the natural.

Without consistent seasons of individual and corporate prayer,

vision will fail because the spiritual warfare and natural circumstances of this world will offer too much resistance without giving God opportunity to speak and move.

4. He gathered all the human resources he needed based on his relationships (1:11—he was cup bearer to the king). Successful leaders pull on all their relationships to gather the supplies and connections needed to implement their vision. Everyone has a constellation of relationships, and within that circle is usually the provision for the vision. Instead of always looking on the outside for your answers, most of the time the people and resources you need to fulfill your vision are already in your midst.

5. He succinctly articulated his compelling vision in a few sentences (2:17-18). All vision and mission should be collapsed down to brief mottoes, acronyms or statements that succinctly describe the vision and motivate the people. Vision and/or mission statements that are too long or convoluted make it difficult for the average person to wrap their brain around it. God told Habakkuk to write the vision down and make it plain so that the messenger could run with it (Hab. 2:2).

Hence, every person in an organization or congregation should be able to convey the vision of the house. Consequently, when people do not have the vision or know the vision, they are scattered and aimless (Prov. 29:18).

6. He refused to be distracted by opposition (2:19-20; 6:2-4). Every leader and organization will have to contend with competing voices and loyalties that demand focus and attention. One of the great keys to the vision is to be able to stay focused and keep the main thing the main thing, and keep first things first. If Satan cannot destroy you, he will try to distract you with good or appealing things that can lure you away from God's best plan for your life. (Satan doesn't come in a red suit and pitchfork but appears as an

angel of light according to 2 Cor. 11:14.)

7. He utilized a team of volunteers committed to the cause (3:1-32). No growing organization can survive if it depends merely upon a few people. Every successful vision requires a team of committed people to fulfill the dream

For example, the two model churches of the New Testament (in Jerusalem and Antioch) both had a great team of leaders and layers of other leaders who worked together.

8. He instilled courage during times of testing (4:8-12, 14). There will always be opposition, high stress, drama, unforeseen events and crises that oppose godly vision. Leaders have to remain calm, speak peace, have courage and continue to function with high capacity during times of stress, duress and testing.

If you want a church or organization without stress or spiritual warfare, then ask God to take you home to heaven right now. (That's the only place where there is no more crying, sorrow or pain).

9. He set up systems of communication to unite all for battle (4:13, 16-22). The people were not only committed to their vision but were committed to protecting and advancing their vision. To fulfill vision, every person on the team must be trained for battle and be mobilized instantly when an attack comes that threatens the vision. Every church especially needs intercessors in place that can be contacted instantly, and all leaders need to be able to mobilize for strategy with little notice.

10. The people were all bound together with a written covenant (9:38; 13:1-31). People need to be bound together by a written covenant that lays out everything expected. Whatever people don't sign on to, they will not be accountable to.

Generally, people don't do what you expect; they do what you inspect. Nehemiah had to follow up on the covenant by inspecting and enforcing the application of the covenant in chapter 13.

Leaders are not primarily called to be your friends; they are called to push you, hold you accountable and to challenge your complacency if you are not growing.

11. The leaders were all committed to living in the place of their mission (11:1-2). Nehemiah made all the leaders live within the walls of Jerusalem even though it was dangerous. Leaders are called to live in the community they are ministering to, so they have the same care and concern for the wellbeing of the people they live among. Nehemiah celebrated all those who lived in the community and sent a tithe of the people to live there.

I have been living in proximity to the community and city I was called to serve since 1980, even though many of my friends have larger houses with much property outside our city region. I believe Nehemiah demonstrates that our goal should not be comfort but conforming to the will of God in our lives.

12. He was a great fund raiser for the house of God (13:10-12). Without provision, the vision is only a dream and will never be a reality. All successful leaders have to be successful fund raisers! The apostle Paul only wrote one chapter devoted to love (1 Cor. 13) but wrote two whole chapters devoted to raising funds for his ministry (2 Cor. 8 and 9).

Furthermore, I believe every church should have enough income from tithes and offerings so that the lead pastor does not have to work outside the church. This way their time is not divided, and they are not too tired to serve the congregation.

Finally, there is much more in this incredible book that God gave us to teach the principles of organization, teamwork and

city building. Nehemiah illustrates that preaching the word isn't enough for community transformation.

If that were the case, then all he needed was to let Ezra, the biblical scribe, do his thing, and it would have happened automatically. No, we need to have a partnership between the marketplace and full-time church leaders for city building.

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