



Too Soon to Quit by Warren W. Wiersbe Chapter 10-Nehemiah, the Leader
Presented by Dr. Tanya C. Ingram, Director, Christian Education
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I. Nehemiah: Blessed are the balanced

- A. He gave up a comfortable and influential job as cupbearer to the King of Persia to go to the ruined city of Jerusalem where he rebuilt the walls and reset the gates of the city.
- B. Nehemiah stands out as one of the finest leaders in the gallery of Bible success.
- C. He did a marvelous balancing act with six pairs of ingredients that brought him success. He knew God wanted him to lead the Jews in rebuilding the city walls. In 445BC Nehemiah returned with the third group of exiled Jews to Jerusalem.

II. Balancing the Old and the New

- A. Nehemiah lived in the present but deeply respected the past. He loved his nation Israel and wept over the ruins of Jerusalem and the ridicule the people threw at it day by day.
- B. When Nehemiah heard that the walls of the city remained broken and in shambles it filled him with grief, he sat down and wept, repented individually and for his nation, he fasted and prayed but then he got up and went to work.
- C. Nehemiah understood the importance of the work God was calling him to complete. The walls of Jerusalem meant peace and protection for its inhabitants. The city walls also said to other nations that Jerusalem was a separated city, housing a special people who belonged to God. Jerusalem was the Jew's holy city and represented Jewish national identity.
- D. Jerusalem was Nehemiah's homeland. Although Nehemiah lived his life in Babylon, he wanted God to get the glory from his work the Jew past and present to be connected together.
- E. When we look at our present-day condition, thinking about the golden days of the past and challenges of the future, it can become overwhelming and depressing. However, when we take our concerns to God in prayer, He can give us the strength and energy to work toward restoration and wholeness.

III. Balancing the Word and Prayer

- A. Nehemiah knew how to balance the Word of God and prayer. Just like the apostles in the early church who said in Acts 6:4 (NASB) "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Often Satan will try to hinder the work of ministry but prayer and the Word are essential for effective ministry.
- B. Moses understood this as he met God on the mountain or in his private tabernacle (Exod. 33:7-11). Samuel is recorded saying in 1 Sam 12:23 (NIV2011) As for me, far be it from me that I

should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right.

- C. In Nehemiah Chapter 8 we find the Israelites gathering around Ezra who would teach them from the Book of the Law. The law of God is mentioned twenty-one times in this book. As Ezra read and instructed them on the law their lives were changed. They discovered they were supposed to celebrate the Feast of booths and they did.
- D. In Nehemiah Chapter 10 we see how the reading of the law brought conviction to the people's heart and they willingly dedicated themselves anew to the Lord.
 - 1. The Law of Moses also revealed to Nehemiah that there were people in the Jewish assembly who did not belong there.
- E. Nehemiah knew the Word of God (Neh. 1:8-9) and a combination of the Word and the Spirit of God equipped him to serve and do the job God called him to do.
 - 1. There must be a balance if there is to be a blessing. If we have all Bible and no prayer, we have light without heat; and if we have all prayer but no Bible, then we have heat without light, zeal without knowledge.
 - 2. Nehemiah could address the king on earth because he knows how to address the King in heaven.
 - 3. There are 12 occasions of prayer mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah. Some prayers were long, other prayers were short, but all were prayers were directed to the Lord asking for success to accomplish His work for His glory. Many of the prayers took place in mind as Nehemiah worked. Nehemiah was responding to the king, yet he prayed (Nehemiah 2:4) before he responded.
 - 4. Nehemiah demonstrates that God is gracious, present, and powerful. Also, our fears should not stop us from praying that God would equip us to move when doing His work.

IV. Balancing Vision and Knowledge

- A. Nehemiah also balanced vision with knowledge. Jews had been living in Jerusalem at least 70 years prior to Nehemiah's arrival. God gave him the vision for rebuilding the walls but that wasn't enough. After Nehemiah arrived to Jerusalem, he went out at night with a few others.
 - 1. This undercover survey of the ruins of the city late night helped him get the firsthand information he needed to deal with this serious problem. Nehemiah took time to survey before he started talking and sharing what the Lord gave him.
 - 2. He challenged the Jewish leaders to rebuild the city walls and they agreed to work together with him to get the job done.
- B. It is important that we survey the situation with the eyes of faith not just with the human assessment. When we look at the situation with human eyes, we only see what blocks us and barriers. We must learn to look through the lens of faith and the *vision* God gives us.

1. Think of the twelve spies that Moses sent to survey the land of Canaan, ten had no faith at all; only Joshua and Caleb believed the Canaanites were the grasshoppers and the Israelites were the giants.
 2. The apostles didn't have enough money to buy bread for the 5000 hungry people and could not see how a boy's lunch could feed everybody; but Jesus solved the problem by trusting the Father. (John 6:1-15).
- C. When the Lord calls us to do a job, He usually gives us enough challenges to excite us, enough problems to humble us and enough promised to keep us trusting and working.
 - D. Faith doesn't mean we ignore the facts, it just means we see them and weight them from God's viewpoint.
 - E. Don't be afraid of the facts, the more you know about your situation, the better you can pray and the wiser you will be in handling your problems. Believers don't need to live in denial or hide our heads in the sand. Remember this David didn't ask how tall Goliath was, he just knew God was bigger and acted accordingly.

V. Balancing Leading and Serving

- A. Nehemiah was both a leader and a servant and this balance is important to effective service to the Lord.
- B. Nehemiah did not sit comfortably, enjoying status and tucked away from the people. Rather he was on the job day and night. He worked with others and not alone.
- C. As the king's appointed governor, Nehemiah could have exercised authority and enjoyed special privileges. Instead he was with the workers (Neh. 4:21-23); he dealt personally with the Jews who were selfishly taking advantage and exploiting the poor instead of assisting them (Neh. 5:1-13). He refused to take special allowance that were rightfully his (Neh. 5:14-19). He shared what he had and he was an example to everyone of sacrifice and service.
- D. Once again, the character of God is revealed, God cares for the poor and the oppressed. God demonstrates that caring for others is more important than personal gain. God demonstrated He is not against wealth or the wealthy, but He is against those that exploit and are greedy. Moses had taught and it was a part of God expectation that Israelites had a responsibility to care for the poor (Exodus 22:22-27; Leviticus 25:35-37).
- E. Jesus was present with the disciples. He did not use his position to promote himself and often reminded the disciples "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27) Jesus challenges all of us who belong to Him and seek to serve Him to do the same.

VI. Balancing Building and Guarding

- A. Nehemiah knew the importance of both building and guarding: if he didn't protect what he had built the enemy could take it from him and his labor would be in vain.
- B. When the enemies who surrounded Jerusalem saw that their underhanded schemes were working they tried the fear. They started a rumor that they would soon attack the city and stop the progress of the word (Neh. 4:7-23)

- C. While some Jews believed this rumor and became scared Nehemiah did not. He posted armed guards at key places on the wall, while others work on the wall and other stood guard with spears and swords.
- D. “To pray and not watch is presumption” said Charles Spurgeon, “and watching without praying is equally futile”. Nehemiah and the people did both Nehemiah 4:8-9 (NIV2011) ⁸ They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. ⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.
- E. Sanballat, governor of Samaria tried to scare Nehemiah (Neh 4:1;7). Tobiah, the Ammonite, and the prophet Noadiah and her fellow prophets tried to intimidate Nehemiah (Neh 6:14). However, in the face of his enemies and their motives he maintained balance, stayed alert and kept working.
- F. We must maintain balance like Nehemiah. To spend all our time fighting enemies but not building the works is to win a war but have nothing to show for it. We will all face opposition and enemies in life. Stay calm and keep serving God.

VII. Balancing Burdens and Blessings

- A. Nehemiah and the Jewish people who returned to Jerusalem had to balance the balance burdens with blessings as they lived and worked in the holy city.
- B. It was a blessing for them to be in their own land and to work in Jerusalem with people of like faith and heritage.
- C. It was a special privilege to work on the walls and gates and help beautify and fortify the one city that was closest to their hearts.
- D. But life wasn’t easy in Jerusalem and work wasn’t easy. “The strength of the laborers is giving out” said some of the people from Judah, “and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall” (Neh 4:10)
- E. When they temporarily left the city, there was always the threat of an ambush and if they remained the enemy troops would attack and take over.
- F. They wept when they heard the law read and explained (Neh 8:9-10), but they rejoiced when they celebrated the feast and shared good gifts with others. (Neh 8:11-18).
- G. If we want to have a strong finish in life we must remember that life is made up of blessings and burdens, joys and sorrows. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said “into each life some rain must fall”. Thanks to faith , persistence and hard work it took only 52 days to finish the walls, after which the gates were put into place (Neh 6:16-7:1)

VIII. Needed: Balanced Leaders

- A. There appears to be a leadership shortage in our world today, not only in the political arena but also in the spiritual
- B. Nehemiah was tempted to compromise, but he didn’t and to quit but he kept going.
- C. Nehemiah had his enemies, both outside the city and within because anybody who is given leadership and accomplishes something will have enemies.

- D. But let's not be our own worst enemy because we've allowed ourselves to get unbalanced.
- E. Nobody but the Lord knew that the king's cupbearer in the citadel of Susa was a born leader and a balanced leader that he would be able to recruit, motivate and direct the Jewish remnant to rebuild the walls of their holy city.
- F. He saw the goal and was persistent in running straight toward it and inspiring the people to follow.