

**Spiritual Renewal – Step Ten**  
**Becoming Separate unto the Lord**

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church

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Text: Nehemiah 5:14-19

Purpose: The leadership of Nehemiah demonstrated God's ordination, Nehemiah's organization, and the people's opposition. His leadership qualities were evident by his heart of prayer, his sense of purpose, his powers of persuasion, his Godly perspective and his unwavering persistence.

A 4-year-old son was eating an apple in the back seat of the car, when he asked, "Daddy, why is my apple turning brown?"



"Because," his dad explained, "after you ate the skin off, the meat of the apple came into contact with the air, which caused it to oxidize, thus changing the molecular structure and turning it into a different color."



There was a long silence. Then the son asked softly, "Daddy, are you talking to me?"

I have met several ministers through the years that caused me to say the same thing. “Are you talking to me? I felt this way especially in Dr. Steve Harmon’s Christian Theology class. He would be up there talking and I had NO idea what he was saying.

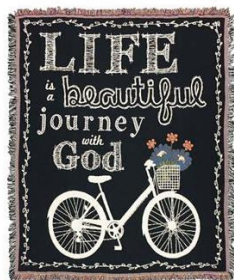
Today, I want you to know I am talking to myself – and with each of you about our need for Spiritual Renewal.



Today we come to the last of our series in the Book of Nehemiah. Over the last ten weeks we have been looking at the topic of Spiritual Renewal. Today, we conclude this series on Spiritual Renewal. Each of us have had times in our life when we need to be renewed. We have all hit a dry period where we once again need to have a passion for the things of God.

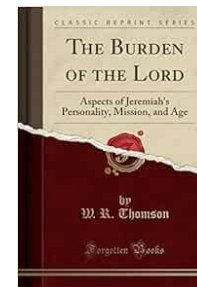
If life is a journey, then each of us are at different places on the path of life. Some gathered here have been on their Christian walk for a long, long time. During your life, you may have experienced marriage, death, sickness, joy, sorrow, depression, accomplishment, and defeat. These events impact and guide our walk with God in more ways than we expect.

I want us to realize that this journey of life is not just events, work, family, or physical challenges. Our life also comprises a spiritual journey with God. It is a journey with God, directed by God, orchestrated between our will and God’s ultimate plan for our life.



Proverbs speaks to men and women facing two paths in life. Psalms speaks of two ways in which you can invest your life – one way brings blessings through obedience to God, while the other brings disaster when we are self willed and self lead apart from the plans and designs of God in our lives. There are two ways set before us.

In the case of Nehemiah, he was simply a cup bearer in the court of the king. He tasted the food, and drank the wine, to make sure no one else had slipped poison into the king’s food or drinks. But one day, he heard how his ancestral lands were laying desolate. He grieved for several days when he heard the reality of the desolate condition of his homeland.



For Nehemiah, he became burdened about the need for Jerusalem’s restoration. He was burdened. Have you ever been burdened to the point of grief about a situation or circumstance? Have you ever been SO burdened with God’s plan for your life that you would do anything, give anything, become anything in order to meet the challenge that burden presented? I am sure several of you have been burdened about a wayward family member. I am sure several of you have been burdened about your children and are continuing to pray for them nightly. I am sure some of you are burdened right now about something that weighs heavy on your heart.

You see, ideas are cheap while burdens are expensive. Ideas can be discarded but burdens have to be seen through. Nehemiah didn’t have an idea about rebuilding Jerusalem, he had a burden. Through that



burden, his life and leadership traits were revealed in the unraveling of God's plan for Nehemiah and Israel.

William J. Chapman relates a story of a group of men that went mountain climbing in the Swiss Alps. They were doing fine until one day, suddenly one of them slipped. Since all of the climbers were tied together, the one that fell jerked all of the other climbers and one by, one, they each began to fall. It seemed as if they were all going to fall over the side of the mountain.



The guide, who was at the head of the line, saw what was happening. He immediately slammed his ice pick deep into the ice and held on for dear life. Finally, they had all slipped and the weight of the group jerked against the guide. He was able to stop the slide because he dug in and held on. All that were connected to the guide were saved.

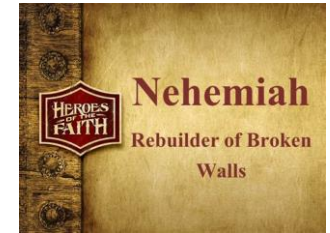
Chapman said that Nehemiah was like that guide. He was the one that held the line and would not let the others fall over the cliff. If Nehemiah was not in Israel's history, there is no telling what would have happened to God's chosen people.

### Three Important Things About Nehemiah<sup>1</sup>

Since this is our last study on the Book of Nehemiah, I want us to examine three important things about Nehemiah – his ordination, his organization, his opposition.

### Nehemiah's Ordination

The first thing I notice about the man called Nehemiah is that he was called by God to do a certain task for the people of Israel. He was ordained by God to go and fulfill a certain task.



Before going to Jerusalem, he was simply an ordinary person serving in the court of the King. When Nehemiah heard of the current state of affairs in Jerusalem, he wept and mourned for days. He prayed a broken-hearted prayer to God, confessing the sins of the people, and seeking favor from the king of Persia. That prayer was mightily answered and the king blessed him with permission and provisions to accomplish the task of restoring a people that were taken into captivity 70 years earlier. Nehemiah's prayer, plea, and plan resulted in moving forward with God's plan through the permission of the king.

### Nehemiah's Organization

When we get to chapter two in this book, we see Nehemiah's gift of organization. He was gifted in being able to organize people and pull them together for certain tasks and projects.



One of the first things that Nehemiah did before moving forward with the project was to spend time surveying the current need before them. He slipped out under the cover of darkness to assess the damage done to the city and what needed to be done in order to succeed. He was not impulsive in this manner – he took time to plan. He needed to give God time to reveal to him what needed to be done

and in what order it needed to be done. A lot of people fail to wait for God's timing before rushing head long into a project. I know in my life; I have rushed headlong into a project without taking due consideration of what God would have me to do. It takes time to examine the past and plan for the future.

But after some planning had been done, Nehemiah stood before the people and said, *"You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach."* (2:17) The people responded, *"Let us rise up and build."* (2:18)

We don't know how long they took to move forward, but they probably didn't waste much time debating – they simply went to work. They started at one place and began to move around the city – different families taking different parts of the wall and putting action to their faith.

## **Nehemiah's Opposition**

As you may surmise, enemies began to arise and attempt to discourage those working on the wall. Some of the opposition arose from within the city, while other arose from outside the city.

### **Opposition from Without**

Last week, we looked at a man by the name of Tobiah. He was one of the people that lived in the area while the people of Israel were in captivity in Babylon. Tobiah was an Ammonite who did not welcome the rebuilding of

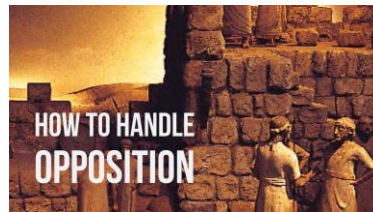
Jerusalem. It was a threat to the Ammonites and they sought to undermine the plans for rebuilding. A second person was Sanballat, a Samaritan. Both worked together to stop the work.

They tried to ridicule the people of Israel and Nehemiah, but that didn't stop the rebuilding. They sought out Arabs, Ammonites, and men from Ashdod to stir up trouble, and that didn't work either.

Nehemiah did the only two things he could do to confront the opposition. The first was pray. Sometimes we may attempt something great for God and find there are enemies attempting to undermine our work and plans. The first thing you should do about it is to pray and leave it with God. The second thing Nehemiah did was to set a guard around those that were working on the wall. Some individuals were working on the wall with one hand and holding a sword in the other. They worked – ready to fight if necessary.

When the enemies of Israel saw they would not stop the work, they tried to entice Nehemiah to come away from the city and meet with them to discuss the matter. Nehemiah realized it was a trap and refused four times to meet with them.

Satan will use every scheme to keep us from doing the will of God in our lives and our community. We need to remember that God has provided spiritual armor to protect us from the attacks of Satan.



## Opposition from Within

When the enemy from outside the camp could not defeat them, Satan began to raise up a threat from within the camp. As hard as it is to believe, most churches do not fail because of an attack from the outside, they fail because of the enemy that is within the camp.



Over the years, I have met several pastors that have been discharged from their congregation. Many times, it is only one person that has set their heart on destroying and removing that pastor. Now that church is struggling to find its purpose once again.

As the people of Israel were working day and night on the wall, they became scared and frightened by the rumors of archers approaching within shooting range. They became discouraged and dissatisfied. They began to mumble and grumble like the people of Israel did with Moses in the wilderness. They had taken their eyes off their purpose and began to grumble.

Aren't we the same way? We can become distracted and discouraged and then we grumble against the task at hand. Have you ever noticed how those that are grumbling the loudest are the ones that are on the outside of an issue? The ones that are doing the work or attending the programs are rarely the trouble makers.

Nehemiah's main trouble was coming from the rulers and nobles in the area. They were charging interest on money they borrowed to purchase food. Nehemiah confronted them and they backed down and another crisis was averted.

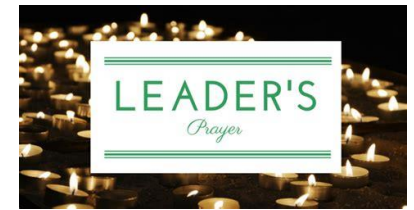
As a result of Nehemiah's confronting the opposition, the wall was completed in 52 days.

## Five Important Things About Leadership

David Jeremiah identified five important leadership characteristics in Nehemiah. If you are seeking to be a leader in your home, your work, your community, or even in our church, you should take note of these five qualities of leadership.

### 1. Nehemiah Was a Man of Prayer

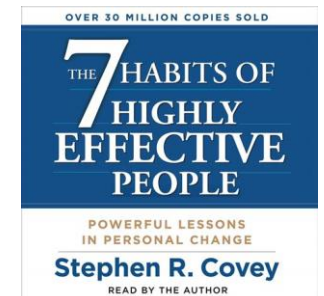
Godly leadership does not exist without prayer. Nehemiah was a godly man and a godly leader. Through biblical history, men and women that have been used mightily of God were committed to prayer. It is difficult to sustain the vision apart from the discipline of prayer. Prayer provides strength, encouragement, and guidance.



Prayer is the common denominator of leadership because the plans we have will only be accomplished through God – not through our own strength.

### 2. Nehemiah Was a Man of Purpose

Secondly, Nehemiah could be described as a man with a mission. He had purpose and knew what He was supposed to do. He wanted to make them into a community of faith once again with a common place of



worship, Jerusalem, and a common faith based upon God's word.

A few years ago, a book came out by Steven Covey called *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. In that book, he encourages people to take time and create a personal mission statement for their life. Sometimes people can come up with one quickly, while others may need several days to ponder that task. Answering that mission statement question is vital for our focus in life.

Once a mission statement has been established, many people reported that this information gave them the clarity of purpose in their life. This clarity allows us to say, "Yes" to some tasks, and "No" to others.

Do you have a personal mission statement? Do you know what God is calling you to do? God has equipped you for a task and has a purpose for your life. Have you taken the time to discover that and live into what God is calling you to do?

Without a vision for our life, we simply live day to day, week to week, and before you know it, our life is over without any sense of accomplishment. Nehemiah lived with purpose and you can too.

### 3. Nehemiah Was a Man of Persuasion

Nehemiah was also a man of persuasion. Great leaders find that people are willing to get behind them and follow them. Godly leaders help people find clarity and a godly purpose, helping them develop a

Leadership is about persuasion,  
presentation and people skills.

Shirley

positive picture for the future, and helping them see what is possible to do, even if they didn't think those things were possible.

Nehemiah was able to motivate a group of people to pick up their tools and weapons and rebuild and defend the city. You can be a person of leadership in the areas in which you work and live. You can motivate others to accomplish God sized tasks. Matthew 19:26 says, "*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*"

If God has called you to a task, He will equip you and guide you to turn the impossible into the possible.

### 4. Nehemiah Was a Man of Perspective

Nehemiah was also a man with an uncanny perspective. When he first came to the city, he took time to survey the situation before Him. He examined the evidence. He

deliberated as to what should be done. He took time to get God's perspective. Sometimes we get so bogged down in the jumbled rocks of life that we cannot see the potential wall that can be resurrected. Nehemiah took time to get God's take on what needed to be done. He could envision how it should be, in spite of Jerusalem's present state. He was able to transmit that vision to others for them to see and they caught the vision and helped make it so.

The opposite of perspective is impulsiveness. Which is jumping to a decision or conclusion without considering all of the facts. It is doing the wrong thing, in the wrong manner, or in the wrong time.



Nehemiah obtained perspective because He sought the Lord when He faced an issue. Maybe we should pray more to seek God's solution. *"Lord, what would you have me do? Please give me wisdom and guidance."* As you face decisions may you turn first to God for His perspective and guidance.

## 5. Nehemiah Was a Man of Persistence

Finally, Nehemiah was a man of persistence. Nehemiah was hardheaded and would not stop until he had accomplished what God wanted. As far as we know, He was unstoppable. He was single minded when it came to rebuilding the wall. He was single minded in keeping the people pure in their observance of God's word.



The key that Nehemiah found in being persistent is in I Thessalonians 5:24. *"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."* Until God says "Quit" our task is to continue until the project is complete.

I don't know what God is calling you to do with your life. I don't know what paths He is leading you to. But I do know this – If you will take these ten steps towards spiritual renewal seriously, I feel confident that God's will for your life can be found.



1. Get back into God's Word. Study it – Read it – Know it.
2. Once you begin to read God's word, you need to become obedient to what it says. Take it seriously and begin to live out your faith by what the Bible teaches.
3. Confess your sin back to God. He is a faithful God who will forgive you and receive you unto Him. He is faithful to forgive ANY and ALL sins.
4. Make Worshipping God a priority in your life. Worship is an outgrowth of our obedience to God's word and our confession of sin. When we understand the grace of God in light of these two, worship will result.
5. Begin to live out your journey of faith in community. Become part of a faith community where you can share with one another the difficulties of life. We need each other.
6. Give your tithes and offerings to support the ministry that feeds you. When you are invested in a community, you will grow spiritually.
7. Give of yourself in service to others. It could be in a church or in another way to minister to others.
8. Take time to thank God for all the blessings he has given.

9. Put away all areas of compromise. You cannot live a honest life of faith where there are contradictions, lies, and distortions. In every area of your life, you need to deal fairly and honest with others. At work and at home.

10. Lastly, separate yourself unto the Lord to take on the burdens of our community. I believe this is only reserved for those that have been faithful to the first nine. God can give us a God size vision, but only if we are willing to give Him our all.

Jesus is calling us to choose Him, as we journey through life.

*Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult* by  
Cecil Alexander



1. Jesus calls us o'er the tumult, of our life's wild restless sea,  
Day by day, His sweet voice soundeth, saying  
"Christian follow Me!"
2. As, of old, Saint Andrew heard it, by the Galilean lake,  
Turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving  
all for His dear sake.
3. Jesus calls us from the worship of the vain world's golden store,  
From each idol that would keep us, saying,  
"Christian love Me more."

4. In our joys and in our sorrow, days of toil and hours of ease,  
Still, He calls, in cares and pleasures,  
"Christian, love Me more than these."

5. Jesus calls us: by Thy mercies, Savior, may, we hear Thy call,  
Give our hearts to Thine obedience, serve and love Thee best of all.

May we have a listening heart that responds to the call of God on our life.

**LET US PRAY**

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup>Outline from David Jeremiah's Book on Nehemiah