

THE BIBLE in a nutshell

Nehemiah



—by Peter Hammond

“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.”

Nehemiah 2:17

Who was Nehemiah?

Nehemiah was a contemporary of Queen Esther, the prophet Haggai, and Ezra. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. It is possible that Queen Esther persuaded her stepson, Artaxerxes, to give this place of honour and trust to Nehemiah.

Distressing situation

News of the trouble and disgrace of the returned exiles in Jerusalem reached Nehemiah. The walls were still broken down and the gates had been burned with fire. Nehemiah sat down, wept, mourned, fasted and

prayed and action. Nehemiah researched amongst the rubble and developed a plan of action.

Nehemiah motivated and mobilised the community to rebuild their portion of the wall. Yet, while each group of families had their own part

When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins, he motivated the community to unite in faith and action to rebuild their walls.

prayed. From his **regret** and **repentance**, he was led to make a **request** of the king, to be released to travel to Jerusalem to aid his people in **rebuilding** the walls of the city. Nehemiah provides us with a proven strategy for success in any venture.

Information and vision

“My people perish for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6. We must be informed. It is when people are informed that they can be inspired

of the wall to work on, they were united in a common goal.

Intercession

In response to the threats from the enemies of God’s people, Nehemiah turned to the Lord in prayer: *“Hear O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads...”* Neh 4:4. This is an example of praying the imprecatory Psalms.

Involvement

Nehemiah encouraged his people: *“Do not be afraid of them. Remem-*

Opposition

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem met resistance. Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab, mocked and ridiculed the people of God as they sought to rebuild the wall. They sought to undermine and interfere with the work and spread false charges against Nehemiah and his followers. When God gives you a work to do, satan sends people to waste your time. Some have the gift of criticism and a ministry of discouragement.



ber the Lord, great and awesome and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.” Neh 4:14. The Bible is not a pacifist book. Christians are called to stand up, to step out and to fight the good fight of faith.

With sword and tool

Nehemiah ensured that his people were armed and prepared. The people worked with all their heart, with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. *“The work is great and extensive and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us!”* Neh 4:19-20.

The trumpet

The trumpet bearer remained close to Nehemiah so that when any portion of the wall came under attack, the trumpet would be blown and the other people would rally to that point under attack.

Avoid distraction

The people were united in the common goal and alert to the threats. When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem sought to distract Nehemiah by calling him for a conference, he responded: *“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I*

leave it and go down to you?” Neh 6:3. Do not allow yourself to be side-tracked. Seek first the Kingdom of God. We should never allow ourselves to be distracted, deviated, discouraged or drawn away from our duty.

Implementation

Within a mere 52 days, the wall was completed. *“And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw*

God’s Word, the response was **repentance** and **revival**. *“The Law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul.”* Psalm 19:7.

Repentance and renewal

The people wept as they listened to the Words of the Law and recognised their sinfulness before a Holy God. Nehemiah responded to the people: *“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!”* Neh 8:10. »

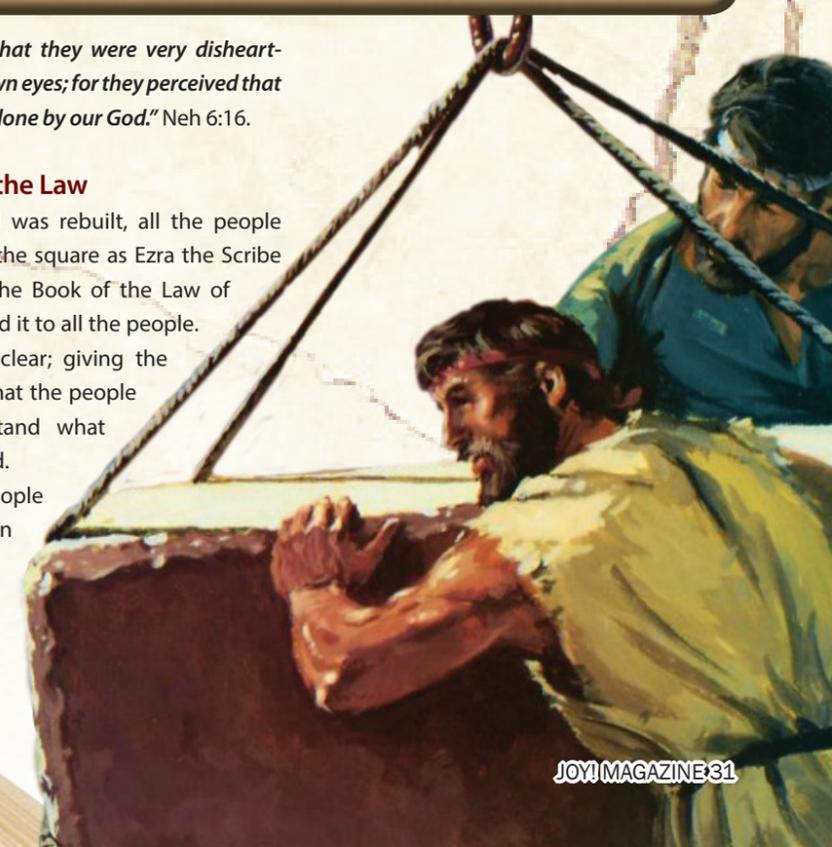
The book of Nehemiah teaches us that discouragement and distraction will come our way, but we are to stand firm in the task at hand. Do not be drawn away from your duty.

these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.” Neh 6:16.

Reading of the Law

Once the wall was rebuilt, all the people assembled in the square as Ezra the Scribe brought out the Book of the Law of Moses and read it to all the people. Ezra made it clear; giving the meaning, so that the people could understand what was being read.

As the people **refocused** on



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Nehemiah 9 records a great prayer of repentance and renewal of the Covenant. **Repentance lends to rejoicing.**

Reformation starts in the home

As goes the family, so goes the nation. The place to begin reformation is in the home. When Nehemiah discovered that some of the believers had "married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab", "I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them, and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying: 'You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves... Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?'" Neh 13:24-27.

Defiled and disqualified

Nehemiah drove from the priesthood a man who was married to a pagan. Nehemiah banished him "because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan." Neh 13:28-30.

this vision, resolutely persevering until all obstacles were overcome. Nehemiah stands out as a man who was both prayerful and practical, one who could sorrow and yet rejoice, one who could be both tough and tender, sensitive to God and to his neighbours. He was concerned with justice and efficiency.

Nehemiah stands out as a man who was concerned with justice and efficiency. He believed that God's glory could be revealed in the nation when reformation began in the home.

Who we marry matters. Marriage involves two families, a community, a nation and the Kingdom of God.

Most of all he was concerned for the Glory of God and the good of His people.

Resolution

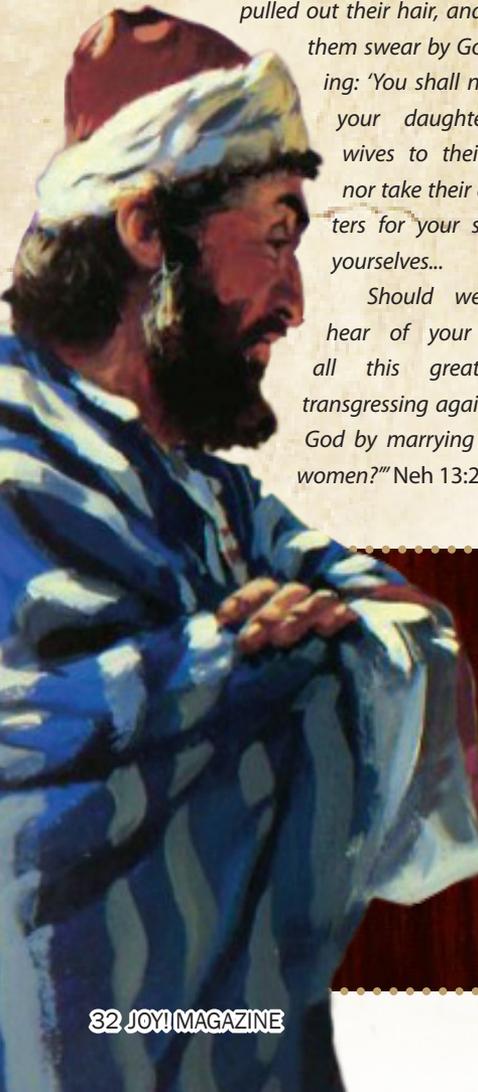
Nehemiah stands out as a man of prayer and action. A man of character, courageous and resilient. A man of vision and a gifted organiser, who was able to mobilise the people to complete a great task. Nehemiah is a book of restoration.

How do you compare?

- Do you have a vision of God?
- Do you have a vision of what God wants done?
- Is the joy of the Lord your strength? ■

Nehemiah organised the people to fulfil

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Principles for Success

Whether you study, work, or are involved in physical training, the principles for success are laid out in Nehemiah. You can apply these principles to school, sports, or

your spiritual development, your marriage, your community, or your country. Study Nehemiah this week and apply its time-tested strategy for success in your life:

- Perseverance leads to achievement
- Communications, Commitment and Concentration of forces leads to victory.
- Resolution, Repentance and Reformation lead to Revival.

