

## When It's Time to Rebuild

The Old Testament story of Nehemiah is instructive for congregational rebuilding. This 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. man of God led one of several efforts to rebuild Jerusalem and restore the worship of God's people. The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587-86, followed by the deportation of thousands, had left Judah desolate.

We pick up the story in Nehemiah chapter one. In Susa, he received word of the continuing woes in Jerusalem and determined to do what he could to help. By God's grace, and as a trusted aide to the king, he was given a unique opportunity to rebuild Jerusalem's walls and worship.

The concepts below are evident in this story of God's work through Nehemiah and the people. They are essential to any effort to rebuild. **Rebuilding requires that we . . .**

- 1. Care enough.** Our hearts must be broken with the need—we must not bemoan the situation without positive action. Dreams (or successes) do not come to those who do not care, or whose concern takes the form of criticism or abandonment.
- 2. Humble ourselves.** When we care enough we humble ourselves to do and be whatever God requires. He grants no vision, no success, to the selfish or proud. Prayer and fasting, with honest confession of our sin, is required.
- 3. Trust God.** We must believe that He will never leave us or forsake us. He blesses all who obey Him. Any dream that is not of faith is a pipe-dream or a nightmare. Trust lives only in hearts that are open and humble.
- 4. Dream the “impossible”.** With God all things are possible. Faith moves us beyond our prejudices and enables us to see God's larger view of His people at work and worship. We look beyond current differences of opinion to the greater vision of unity in love.
- 5. Plan tomorrow, but work today.** A journey begins with one step (not a well-received philosophy in our instant gratification world). God's principle of granting great responsibility to the one who has first been faithful in little is as true today as it was when Jesus stated it. We must focus on what is at hand before we can see transformation. Like Israel, we must move stone upon stone before the whole wall takes shape (i.e. Bible classes for all ages, visiting the sick, teaching the lost, the daily practice of prayer and Bible study, serving wherever we are needed).

Faith looks ahead to the greater good, but never abandons present needs. Loving faith does not run roughshod over the present (and present companions) to hasten the future we would like to see.
- 6. Keep the Dream Alive!** A steady diet of God's Word is the first essential for rebuilding. To forget to immerse ourselves in the Word is to quit listening to God. Secondly, those around us need our encouragement, not our criticism. We do not keep the dream alive for a new wall/temple/congregation by polarizing over how someone is doing his part.

Each of these elements comes from the story of Nehemiah. These will be guiding principles in the weeks and months ahead as we meet together to worship and to plan for a greater future. God blesses humble disciples who honor His process of rebuilding.