



Time to Reflect

- What are some of the necessary qualities that a Christian leader should have today?
- What impresses you the most about Nehemiah and his model of leadership as he sought to consolidate all that had been achieved?

Last week we saw how Nehemiah was faced with even more pressures and plots. Even when the rebuilding project was complete, the schemes continued. Yet, through it all, he continued to display remarkable wisdom and a dependency on prayer. This week we see how Nehemiah had to be vigilant as he sought to consolidate all that had been achieved.

“A city is much more than walls, gates, and houses; a city is people. In the first half of this book, the people existed for the walls, but now the walls must exist for the people.”

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p95)

Specifics

- The beginning of chapter seven in Nehemiah brings with it a significant change in focus. Thus far we have been reflecting on the rebuilding of the wall and the various challenges that Nehemiah experienced. Now our attention is redirected to the process of community formation.
- Once the walls were complete, Nehemiah turned his attention to organising the community so that they could enjoy the quality of life that God wanted them to have.
- Warren Wiersbe suggests, **“God had great things in store for Jerusalem, for one day His Son would walk the city streets, teach in the temple, and die outside the city walls.”¹**
- As Nehemiah sought to consolidate all that had been achieved, he began to move in a faithfully strategic way. In the first instance, Nehemiah sought to enlist leadership (v1-3).
- One of his first acts was to appoint assistants: Hanani and Hananiah (v2). These leaders were specifically chosen because they had integrity and feared God.
- Nehemiah looked for spiritual attributes and not just natural skills or abilities. He wanted to share the burden of leadership with people who were faithful to God – just as he was himself.
- It is important to note that Nehemiah was aware that he couldn’t do everything himself. When he appointed leaders with integrity and faithfulness, Nehemiah sought to provide a lasting depth to all that had been achieved.
- He established a model of leadership and our passage highlights the differing roles that were occupied. Wiersbe reflects on this and he writes, **“Not everybody is called to be a Nehemiah, but some of us can be Hananis, Hananiahs, Rephaiahs, or Shallums, and work with God-given leaders to help get the job done right. God is looking for faithful, God-fearing men and women who will have the courage and conviction to serve Him, come what may.”²**
- Once again we are reminded that everyone has a part to play in serving God.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p95.

² Ibid, p97.

- The wall had been repaired and the gates were set in place (v1). Now guards and gatekeepers were required to offer protection and to control who entered the city.
- This was an important role and it needed people of vigilance and integrity. After all that had been achieved, the wall would have been ineffective if there was no way of controlling who could pass through into the city.
- Wiersbe draws on a powerful lesson from history as he reflects, “...the Great Wall of China was penetrated by the enemy at least four times, and each time the guards were bribed. Gates and walls are only as good as the people who guard them.”³
- We are reminded that every role is significant and every leader, at whatever level of service, needs to be faithful and act with integrity.
- Note the specific instructions that were given in relation to the opening and closing of the city gates (v3) by the gatekeepers. Timings were important so as to safeguard the city from enemy attacks. The need for readiness, vigilance and wisdom are strongly articulated by Nehemiah.
- The role of the guards is also developed in this passage. Nehemiah had some guards at their posts (v3b) and others near their homes. Remember how he got people to work on an area of the wall near to where they lived.
- Nehemiah offered insightful leadership in getting these people to guard the part of the wall that they had built. This was the development of a type of ‘neighbourhood watch’ and it was localised. The people would have been proud of their work and would have protected it at all costs.
- In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul famously offered a word of encouragement. “Therefore, put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13).
- In the face of challenge or adversity, the challenge is to stand firm. Nehemiah is a good example of what it means to stand with faithfulness, integrity and resilience. For all of us, it is important that we follow his example.
- Wiersbe argues, “If God’s people don’t protect what they have accomplished for the Lord, the Enemy will come in and take it over...Every Christian ministry is one short generation away from destruction, and God’s people must be on guard.”⁴
- Nehemiah led the people of Jerusalem to become a vigilant people, protecting that which God had blessed. Today, we need to be a vigilant people ensuring that we remain faithful to God and His Word.
- There are many challenges facing Christianity today and we need more God-fearing watchers on the wall and keepers of the gates. This is an immense calling and requires great faithfulness.
- Like Nehemiah, we should seek to protect Christian communities from the attacks of the enemy.
- Note how Jerusalem was a large but poorly populated city at this particular time (v4). This reminds us that the grace of God is not dependant in numbers and it also challenges us to trust God as we step out in His service.
- God’s ways are perfect and His plans are complete. We simply need to seek His guidance and follow Him. This is what Nehemiah did (v5a) as God led him to focus on community formation.
- Once again, the example of Nehemiah is profound and challenging. He led with wisdom, integrity and faithfulness. He knew God, listened to God, and followed the will of God.
- We are reminded of the importance of staying close to God and trusting Him at all times.

³ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p97.

⁴ Ibid, p97.