

Introduction:

1. One of the great men of the Old Testament is Nehemiah. He was a great leader and builder, the one who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. We might be surprised to learn that Nehemiah lived 1,000 miles from Jerusalem at the beginning of the story, [Nehemiah 1:1](#). Upon hearing reports of the condition of the city, he was deeply grieved, [Nehemiah 1:2-3](#).
2. Nehemiah wasn't a builder by trade. He was the king's cupbearer, [Nehemiah 1:11b](#). In spite of the fact that he lived far from Jerusalem, was not a builder by trade, and was not a free man, he yet became a legendary builder and is one of the great success stories of the Old Testament.
 - a. He received permission from his master, the Persian king, to go and rebuild the city, [Nehemiah 2:4ff](#).
 - b. Nehemiah went to the city and rebuilt its wall in what must be record time, [Nehemiah 6:15](#).
 - c. Obviously, there is much more to the story than these few verses we have read. Between chapters one and six there are all sorts of obstacles and problems and issues to be sorted out by Nehemiah. We are not going to focus on those obstructions to the construction, but on the man and the mindset that made him what he was.

The Lesson:**I. Why do we need to study success stories like Nehemiah?**

- A. We need to do it for the sake of our work—saving souls. The people of God have a great task!
 1. There are some principles we can learn from this man that will help us in our work.
 2. I like Nehemiah because he is a man who started a great task and finished it. He serves as an example to encourage us and to boost our spirits, motivating us to do better.
- B. How many of us have said we were going to do something great in God's kingdom?
 1. "I'm going to read the Bible through this year." "I'm going to be a preacher, deacon or elder." "I'm going to get involved in evangelism in a way I never have before." "I'm going to teach my friend."
 2. There may be a hundred things you can think of. With some of these things, we may have made progress; with others, we went nowhere.
- C. "Whatever happened...?" Those are sad words, especially when we follow them with some dream or goal that was never reached. There was a time when we were going to do great things. Now we can only look back and think of what might have been.
 1. The saddest things are not the things we would do for ourselves that we never accomplished, but the things we would do for others or for God.
 2. Have you ever planned to achieve a goal in God's service but never reached it? One man said, "I dared to dream, but I never dared to do." That's sad.
 3. The things that may have happened to us did not happen to Nehemiah! Nehemiah is going to help us get a fresh start. If we will listen to his story, he will provoke us to have the right spirit.
- D. If we are going to win more souls for the Lord, we need to have whatever Nehemiah had. Is there any work more important than soul winning?

II. Ten things that made Nehemiah successful.

- A. *He saw what was needed.* He identified the problem, and realized something must be done about it, [Nehemiah 1:2-3](#). The situation at Jerusalem was one that could not be left alone.
 1. There were plenty of people at Jerusalem who saw this terrible situation everyday; maybe they became used to it and didn't think it was such a big deal. Not Nehemiah!
 2. With respect to saving souls, let's never become complacent or used to the fact that the majority of the people in this city are lost and are headed for an eternity without God!
 3. Can you see that, with respect to evangelism, there is a great need to act on our part?
- B. *He was determined to act.* Other Jews may have bemoaned the condition of the walls; maybe they talked about what they would do someday. Nehemiah really meant to do something about it.
 1. He had to do something, even if he got started with laying just one brick—he had to start somewhere. But, the first thing he did was to pray, [Nehemiah 1:4ff](#). The second thing was to go to his king and ask permission to go to Jerusalem, [Nehemiah 2:5](#).
 2. Sometimes we talk about what we want to do in life, but we are more like children than adults. Eight-year-old boys say "I'm going to be a fireman or an astronaut, or a race car driver or..." It's just talk and is forgotten tomorrow. If we are going to accomplish something for God, we've got to really mean it and be determined to act. Nehemiah was serious!

- C. *He formulated a plan.* Nehemiah not only went to the king and got his permission, he went to Jerusalem and quietly planned how to get the job done, Nehemiah 2:11ff.
1. Without a plan, work doesn't get done; people who don't plan are people who don't do.
 2. Anything that is really important to you in life is worth a plan—you already know that. If a bride is planning her wedding, she meticulously and strategically arranges every detail. If a man is going to buy a new truck, he will plan, scheme, juggle numbers and arrange everything so he can make that payment. Why? Because he cares about that truck. And the bride cares about that wedding.
 3. You've got to care—not just about other people—but that your life means something! You've got to care about what your life is about, about what you want to accomplish, and then develop a plan to get it done. With no plan, you have no direction. Most people fail in that.
- D. *He counted the cost.* That was the reason for going to the king—a thing that involved risk; that was the reason for carefully surveying the city, Nehemiah 2:1-2; 11ff.
1. Nehemiah couldn't afford to be like the man building the tower in Luke 14:28-30. We can't afford that either. Was Nehemiah willing to take some risk, willing to bear the cost in time, materials and energy to lead the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem? He was!
 2. To be the Lord's worker will cost you something! Don't fool yourself. Like Nehemiah, we need to face reality. It's easy to take on a task without thinking of the hard work and hours required to finish it; then we run out of zeal or energy—leaving work for God undone!
- E. *He acted without delay.* Nehemiah prayed to God, asked and got permission to go to Jerusalem; he then went, surveyed the city and built, Nehemiah 2:16-18. He had a sense of urgency!
1. Sometimes we get nothing done because we delay our plans. We get a limited satisfaction in saying "Someday..." It makes us feel better that we have good intentions.
 2. Good intentions don't count in life. Successful people develop a *do it now* habit, Philippians 3:13. Paul said, "This one thing I do..." It wasn't, "Someday I will..." Paul acted now!
- F. *He was not distracted.* Were there any things that might have distracted him? Of course! The devil will always see to that. See Nehemiah 2:19; 6:1-4.
1. Can enemies distract us? Of course they can. But more often than not, we just get our lives so cluttered up with things that we provide our own distractions. As a result, our lives are often way out of balance, with very little time given to spiritual things.
 2. Is there a project at home that is lying there unfinished? What happened? Did you get side-tracked? What happens in home improvement also happens in spiritual improvement.
- G. *He maintained his courage.* Enemies mocked Nehemiah, but he persisted, Nehemiah 4:1-3.
1. It is easy for us to become discouraged, especially in the face of mockers. Or maybe we give up because of self-doubt, or because others threw cold water on our plans.
 2. We need the courage of Nehemiah, the dogged determination that says "I will not quit."
- H. *He was not afraid to try.* Was it possible for him to fail? Maybe, but he wasn't deterred by that.
1. By the very fact that he went and built the wall shows he was not afraid to try.
 2. Fear of failure can be so powerful in our lives. Fear is the great immobilizer, Matthew 25:25. We would be much better off to try something great and fail, than to try nothing and succeed. Possibly the number one deterrent that keeps us from speaking to others about the Lord is fear—fear of failure and fear of rejection. How do we overcome that?
- I. *He knew the value of teamwork.* Could Nehemiah rebuild the whole thing by himself? If you give him a hundred years—maybe. But he built it in 52 days—by teamwork.
1. The entire third chapter is about how the people of Jerusalem worked as a team, Nehemiah 3:1-32. There was an exception; some of the Tekoites did not cooperate (verse 5).
 2. The fact that some did not cooperate did not stop the others from working. Furthermore, every worker did his own part. It wasn't a matter of jealousy about "my part of the wall."
 3. In your congregation, you need to see yourselves as a team of workers and cooperate with one another, each person doing what he can do to help reach the goal of saving souls.
- J. *He remembered God throughout the whole ordeal.* This is how we overcome fear, how we maintain our courage, how we avoid distractions, and how we deal with every hindrance!
1. A casual reading of Nehemiah's book shows constant prayer on Nehemiah's part and constant trust in the Lord, Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2:4; 4:4; 4:9. Nehemiah constantly talks about how the hand of God was upon them in their work, Nehemiah 2:8; 2:18; 2:20; 4:15.
 2. All of this means that our trust should be in God, not in ourselves, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.

Conclusion:

1. This lesson hasn't been about *what to do*, but about the mindset we need *in order to do*.
2. These are success principles that are needed in virtually every endeavor in life. Learn them well!