

SERVING GOD WITH DETERMINED FAITH - 3

Take a Step of Faith

"And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.... The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding...."
- Nehemiah 2:8, 20

Bible Truth:

What God originates, God orchestrates.

Life Impact:

God strengthens those who act in faith in responding to spiritual challenges.

Nehemiah was just a normal God-fearing man who was simply faithful to God. God brought to him the opportunity of his life in which he exercised faith and trust in God to step out in ways that he had never done before. Three months earlier, a delegation of Jews from Judah had come to Susa to ask Nehemiah to help them. As he fasted and prayed, Nehemiah sensed God wanted to use him to deliver his people. He sensed God had given him his position of cupbearer to the king to enable him to intercede for his people. Nehemiah too feared failure. Indeed a mistake could have cost him his life. In spite of his fear, however, he committed himself to do what God had put in his heart to do for Jerusalem (2:12).

Welcome

What is one of the most daring things you have ever done? What made it so daring?

Word

Read Nehemiah 2:1-10.

1. There was a period of about three months from when Nehemiah first heard the news about the walls in Jerusalem to when he approached the king. As you read this passage, how is Nehemiah's faith evident in his prayers? In his patience? In his preparation?
2. Why did Nehemiah have to exercise faith by waiting? What kind of risks was Nehemiah taking by asking the king for approval to leave his post? In what ways had Nehemiah backed up his faith by being prepared for a moment of opportunity?
3. Comment on the following, "Faith is not absence of fear, but willingness to do what is right in spite of fear." Specifically, what gave Nehemiah the confidence or courage to step out in faith?
4. Share an example from your life where you saw that trust in God and faithfulness in doing what you should do have worked together. What principles do you see in the story of Nehemiah that give guidance here?

Read Nehemiah 2:11-20.

5. After surveying the situation firsthand, how did Nehemiah "rally" the people so that they responded as eagerly as they did to the rebuilding project (v 18)?
6. God could have directly moved the hearts of all the Israelites to be burdened to rebuild the broken walls. God didn't necessarily need Nehemiah's involvement. But this is not normally how God chooses to work. Rather, He worked first in Nehemiah's life, then in the heart of the king, and then through Nehemiah God moved the Israelites to unite in rebuilding the walls. What are the implications of this observation and how might they apply to your life?

Worship/Works

In what area of your life is God calling you to take a step of faith? Explain. What do you learn from this passage that could be applied to your life situation? Call attention to **2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**, and use it as part of a prayer or a word of blessing for your group. "Fill our hearts, Lord, with things we can do for you in this place." Songs: 764—Teach Me Lord To Wait; 915—Trust & Obey; 794—Unto Thee, O Lord; 213—He Is Able.

Leader's Notes – Take a Step of Faith (Lesson Three)

Discussion:

Question 1: Nehemiah's faith is evident through his prayers. Nehemiah understood that his success was a result of "the gracious hand of God" (notice 2:8, 12, 20). Nehemiah believed that whether the king would be receptive to his request or not was dependent ultimately not on what he said but on what God would do. Faith is also apparent in Nehemiah's patience, as he waited for the Lord to open a door of opportunity. (There's a big difference between trying to make something happen, rather than watch it happen!) Nehemiah's faith was also evident in the preparation he did beforehand.

Question 2: These questions are intended to help draw out and expound upon the discussion from the first question. King Artaxerxes of Persia was not always in favor of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Early in his reign, he received a letter from the Samaritan officials complaining about the Jewish efforts to rebuild the city, and ordered the reconstruction halted (Ezra 4:11-23). As cupbearer, Nehemiah was not to appear sad in the king's presence. Artaxerxes could have immediately commanded Nehemiah to be removed from his presence and executed. No wonder Nehemiah "was overwhelmed with fear." What might have resulted in Nehemiah's immediate death instead began unfolding, before his eyes, as the beginning of the answer to his prayer. Just like that, after three months of pleading with God and waiting for God to act, Nehemiah was about to see God's hand move. Notice Proverbs 21:1, "A king's heart is a water channel in the Lord's hand: He directs it wherever He chooses."

Question 3: Faith by its nature carries an element of uncertainty. Had God really told him to intercede with the king for the Jewish people in Judah? Would God now help him? Had not the king received many complaints about the rebellious nature of the Jews in Jerusalem and Judah? How would the king respond? Nehemiah's confidence grew out of his conviction that God would enable him to do what God had put in his heart to do (2:12). "What God originates, God orchestrates." Our positive response of trust and obedience enables the fulfillment of God's purposes in and through us.

Question 5: In verses 17-18, notice the third person plural is used, "we" and "our." Nehemiah first identified himself with their need. And second, Nehemiah identified God with their need (v 18). He shared with them how God had already begun to bless the work. A godly leader's greatest responsibility is to constantly bring faith to bear on every situation.

Question 6: Nothing happens until someone provides leadership for it. Often God raises a leader—someone with God-given ability and responsibility to influence a group of God's people to accomplish God's purpose for that group. How gracious God is to use us when He is fully able to work in any and every way He pleases on His own, apart from us. God often chooses to fulfill His will and accomplish His work through His human instruments. God graciously shares with us the joy and responsibility of joining Him in His work.