

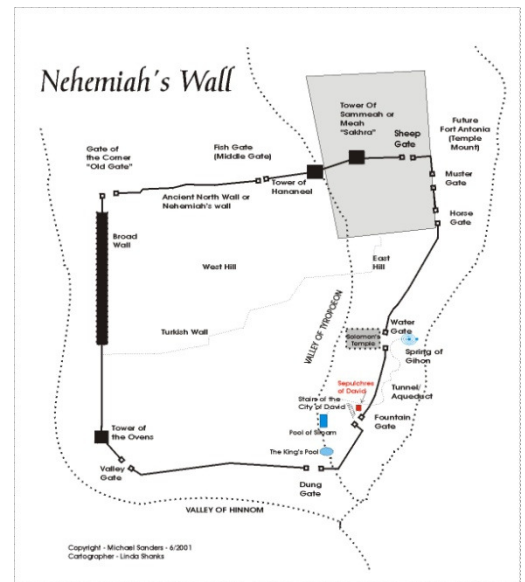
The Details of a Great Plan

A Examination of the Work of Nehemiah

By Doug Hamilton

It was October 2, 444 BC and the location of Jerusalem. A man of God named Nehemiah had just led a group of patriotic Jews to rebuild the wall that was destroyed in 586 BC when Babylon carried the nation of Israel into captivity. This wall was an estimated ten feet high and 4.5 miles long. According to Josephus it encompassed an area of 1.5 square miles or 960 acres. This was a huge project in the history of Israel and yet it only took fifty-two days to construct, including the making of the bricks, collecting of the stone and cutting of the wood. The dedication of this event confirmed that it was a great plan that came to fruition.

Behind every great plan you will find certain steps that must take place. The historical account of Nehemiah is a good outline of the details of a great plan. The title of the lesson is “The Details of a Great Plan.



The need is identified.

- Neh 1:1-3 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol,² that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem.³ They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”
 - The formerly great city of Jerusalem is in ruin and the wall is still destroyed. Until that wall would be rebuilt, it could never return to greatness because thieves and vandals would always be able to reap havoc. Nehemiah identified this as a big problem.

The identified is internalized.

- Neh 1:4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.
 - Nehemiah wept, fasted and prayed for days, resulting in an internalization of the need that awaited to be properly addressed.

The internalized is communicated.

- Neh 1:11 "...Now I was the cupbearer to the king."
- Neh 2:4-5 Then the king said to me, “What would you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.⁵ I said to the king, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.”
 - Nehemiah communicated this need to King Artaxerxes. He was the official cupbearer of the king, which is an important position. He basically was in charge of seeing that nobody poisoned the king. When his internalized need reached the ears and eyes of the king, then great things could happen to meet the need.

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The communication is empowered.

- Neh 2:7-8 And I said to the king, “If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, ⁸ and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go.” And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.
 - The king processed the information and empowered Nehemiah with permission, funds and the responsibility to fix the problem at hand.

The empowered makes an assessment.

- Neh 2:12-15 And I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding. ¹³ So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon’s Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire. ¹⁴ Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King’s Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass. ¹⁵ So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.
 - Once the empowered Nehemiah arrived, he went out at night to make a private assessment in order to make the best decisions to answer the need. This is crucial because in order to accurately handle the problem one must accurately understand the problem.

The assessment leads to recruits.

- Neh 2:17 Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.”
 - Once he gained an accurate assessment, he could relay that information to the others that would then buy into the vision.

The recruited are employed.

- Neh 2:18 I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work.
 - With everyone on board, they can finally get to work. They were building with a common vision.

The employed are confronted.

- Neh 4:1-3 Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews. ² He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy men of Samaria and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?” ³ Now

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Tobiah the Ammonite was near him and he said, “Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!”

- Have you ever noticed there are always obstacles that stand in the way? This is true in the case of Nehemiah. The pagan neighbors liked a weak Jerusalem because they wanted to be the big kid on the block. They tried everything from ridicule to lies just to throw them off the path. They underestimated *Neh 4:6* “...for the people had a mind to work.”

The confronted are encouraged.

- Neh 4:14 When I saw their fear, I rose and spoke to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses.”
 - Nehemiah did the best thing he could have done when it came to the discouragement of the pagan neighbors; he encouraged them. He reminded them that they worshipped a powerful God Who does powerful things in their lives.

The encouraged overcome.

- Neh 4:15-16 When our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had frustrated their plan, then all of us returned to the wall, each one to his work. ¹⁶ From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.
 - They did not stop the work, but simply adjusted. Half of the workers guarded while the other half built. They simply alternated in order to hang onto to the goal.

The “overcomers” succeed.

- Neh 6:15-16 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. ¹⁶ When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.
 - In just fifty-two days they finished the impossible task of rebuilding the wall around the great city of God. The “overcomers” had success.

Every great mission of life has details that must be figured in to guarantee success. With that in mind, I would like to briefly discuss our mission to Timothy Hill Ranch last week.

The need is identified.

- The Timothy Hill Ranch was founded in March of 1980 at Riverhead, NY as a result of a death of a young man named Timothy Hill, the son of Jerry and Fern. Timothy always had a vision as a young child to have a ranch to reach out to underprivileged inner-city youth. On May 11, 1972 Timothy was hit by a vehicle while riding his bike to school. His dream would continue on through this ranch that bears his name. There have been more than 1,000 inner-city youth that ranged from troubled to orphans that have passed through the doors since it has opened. Many of these youth went on to convert and go onto our

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brotherhood universities. It is the only churches of Christ children's home in the Northeast that exists.

- There is always a need for volunteers to come and work at the ranch and raise funds to keep this work going. For the thirty full-time residents as well as the staff this is encouraging, fiscally sound and beneficial to learning how to be a good volunteer in the kingdom of God.



The identified is internalized.

- With an opportunity like that and the fact that we made a previous trip a few years prior, we had already internalized it. We wanted to do it again so that we could experience it again.

The internalized is communicated.

- Dave Miller, our deacon of youth, and I did not have a king to communicate this to, but we do have someone better...the elders. They overlook the care of the flock and commissioned this mission.



The communication is empowered.

- The elders also thought it good and they empowered it in prayer, the budget and encouragement.

The empowered is assessed.

- We made the calls, assessed the plans, defined the parameters and set the dates. It would be necessary to raise some funds from the members of the congregation for this to occur. Immediately cans were ordered, designed and dispensed. Our mission would also be to work in the thrift store and landscaping. Those tasks were very much needed.

The assessment leads to recruits.

- This information was drawn up and many recruits were assembled, including chaperones and youth. We had twenty-five that made trip.

The recruited are employed.

- We fellowshiped in the streets of Manhattan in search for food. Yes, we found it.
- We passed out flyers for FocusOnTruthOnline in the streets of Time Square.
- We spent many hours laboring in flowerbeds, bushes, garages and linens.

The employed are confronted.

- We met the minor obstacles of a couple hours of "parking-lot" traffic in the Big Apple.
- We met the minor obstacles of thistles that surprised the eager grip of a weeding hand.
- We met the minor obstacle of not enough beds, or enough showers or even enough time.

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The confronted are encouraged.

- We fellowshiped together, ate meals together, had singing together, had a devotion together and worshipped together. There really was not any negative feedback that we encountered on the trip. It was very encouraging!

The encouraged overcome.

- The traffic end was beaten, the thistles were vanquished to the lawn bag and improved living conditions were adjusted.

The “overcomers” succeed.

- Lou Boccio said there was a spike of hits of 1,000 on his website on the day that we passed the flyers out in Time Square.
- Entire storage garages were cleared out and organized. Barbara, the lady that ran the thrift store, said that it was an incredible help and that she would love to have her workers to assist again.
- The primary flower beds of the seventy acre ranch were complexly weeded, raked and mulched. We actually placed 240 bags of mulch, resulting in a complete transformation of the front of the ranch.
- All the trees and shrubs of the ranch were sprayed with deer repellent.
- Stacks of donated linens were washed, ironed, folded and sealed to be sold in the store.
- We had campfire devotion with the residents of the facility. This was followed by some night b-ball with the same.
- The same residents joined us in worship the next morning and many new friendships were started.
- All together we donated more than \$1,000 for the home and over 150 donated work hours for the home. Even more important was the priceless adventure and fellowship of reaching our goal. Jerry Hill called me on Friday night, knowing we were going to discuss this morning. Basically summarizing: “Thank you so much to the youth group and chaperones for making this sacrifice. Thank you so much to the elders for allowing this. Thank you to the congregation for funding this. Thank you to God for making it possible. I am looking forward to working with you far into the future.”

In Summary:

Behind every great plan are some great details. Learn them from Nehemiah and let them be your guide.