

A Step-By-Step Guide For Rebuilding a Country

3 Things You'll Need to Get Started

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Nehemiah chapter 2. On your tables and also this will be for you online as well is, if you're interested, is a report on the trip that I took to Asia, the three weeks I spent in Asia. This was actually prepared by our new Asia director and his team so we here in Orlando, we didn't have anything to do with this report. There's a lot of pictures and things like that. If you're interested, please feel free to take a copy of that.

What we're trying to accomplish here at this Bible study is we are trying to disciple men who will, in turn, disciple other men. We want to raise an army of disciple-making disciples. In terms of, you heard earlier in the announcements, the idea of inviting other men, but here's who we want to be thinking about. Who are the men 35, 45, 55 years of age who, if they don't get some help, are going to shipwreck their lives? Who are the men who are 35, 45, 55, 65, 75 years of age, who are the men that you know in this community who really could make a difference in our history going forward? Those are the men that we want to have here. I'd say to you men online, it's exactly the same. How are you going to build or rebuild your community for the future?

We're doing a series here called A Step-by-Step Guide for Rebuilding a Country built around the book of Nehemiah. First, let's do a shout out. We have a brand new group today. 20 men who have just started meeting at their church on Saturdays at 8:00 on Saturday morning at the Church of the Nazarene in Richmond Heights, Ohio and Mark Wheeler is the leader there. By the way, I guess you guys probably already know, but Wayne Morgret is your field representative there, area director. I wonder if you would join me in giving a rousing and a very warm and hearty welcome to this new group. We're so excited to have them, the men from the Church of the Nazarene. Would you join me in giving them a big welcome? One, two, three, hoorah. Welcome, guys. We are so glad to have you with us. I'm very excited about it.

Again, the series is A Step-by-Step Guide for Rebuilding a Country. We also said that it might be about you might be trying to figure out how to rebuild your marriage, your business, your career. You might be trying to figure out how to rebuild you. The point is these principles, although we're focusing firstly on the idea of what Nehemiah is doing in rebuilding his country, these principles apply everywhere.

Last time we talked about the message title was The First Step. You know, what does God want you to do? We talked about how God gives men burdens. Start with the thing that burdens you and you want to figure out what God wants you to do. What is it that burdens you? Then let God give you his vision for what he wants you to do through prayer just like Nehemiah did. The whole first chapter is mostly about prayer.

Then we saw how sad and afraid both that Nehemiah was. We talked about being determined to do, to act, even in the face of sadness and fear. I ran across something in Ezekiel 20. I'm going through the message this year in my one year Bible. In Ezekiel 20, three times it says in different ways God is being quoted. He says, "I acted out of who I was, not what I felt." Isn't that beautiful? "I acted out of who I am or who I was, not how I felt." This idea of having fear, having sadness, okay, you have it. Get over it and act out of who you are, your character, who you are, not how you feel about things because you're always going to have feelings that come and go. The big idea was the first step to every great outcome is to imagine its possibility. We talked about vision.

Now today we're going to talk about the three things you're going to need to get started. Again, Nehemiah chapter 2 and we're going to begin at verse 6. I want to go ahead and give you the big idea for the day. Preparation without prayer is presumption. If you do everything you're supposed to do and all the planning and so forth and you don't pray about it, you are presuming upon God. That's what we actually saw Nehemiah not doing in chapter 1 in the first message, that he began with prayer. It was through prayer that the vision came. He did not presume upon God but that's only the first half of today's big idea. Here's the whole big idea. Preparation without prayer is presumption. Likewise, prayer without preparation is presumption. You have to have both of these things going on otherwise you're presuming upon God.

I've been fascinated over the years how businessmen will get involved in ministry and they will be so careful. They make sure all their Ts are crossed, all their Is are dotted, really organized in their business. Then they get involved in a ministry and they throw their brains out the window. It's just like, "Oh, God will take care of it." Well, yeah. God will take care of it but he's going to do that by using the same wits that he gave you to succeed in business to also then succeed in the work of the ministry. In other words, prepare yourself. Don't just pray and think, "Oh, God's going to make it all work out." My disciple, Jim Gillian, he was an engineer so this is the way he would talk. He said any time somebody would talk about, "Oh, let's just let the spirit lead us," he'd say, "I believe the Holy Spirit can work through organization as well as just letting things happen." That's what this is about here today.

Three things you're going to need. First of all, you're going to need the right resources. Let's look at chapter 2 verse 6. He has now prayed to God, talked to the king. Verse 6, "Then the king with the queen sitting beside him asked me, 'How long will your journey take and when will you get back?' It pleased the king to send me so I set a time." One of the resources that you're going to need of course is the time in order to do the work. Verse 7, "I also said to him, 'If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates so that they will provide me safe conduct until I arrive in Judah?'" You're going to need authority. You're going to need the authority to do. That's one of the resources you're going to need. In this particular case, protection was one of the resources, protection so you can actually do the work.

Verse 8, "And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residents that will occupy?" Okay, again, there are just the physical resources that are necessary. "Because the gracious head of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests. So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me."

If you want to rebuild a country, you have to know what to do and how to do it. In order to be able to do that, you have to have the right resources to be able to pull that off. We see that one of the things that

Nehemiah did was he was using his intellect, he was using his wits, he was using his brains to assemble the resources that he would need in order to pull this off. I had to put a new air conditioning system in this week. That's an expenditure that brings no joy. I mean, no joy. My neighbor saw these couple pickup trucks in the driveway and said, "Oh, you got a new air conditioner." I said, "Yeah, but no joy."

It's too loud. You know, it's like off the charts loud so they send a technician out yesterday. Now, what if that technician had arrived and listened to the noise. By the way, he agreed that it was too loud. It's a Trane unit. Should I have said that? Well, I don't know. I have two Trane units and the one is fine but, you know ... He acknowledged. He said, "Wow, that's pretty loud."

But now what if the next thing he said, "Yeah, it's too loud. We're agreed on that, but I have no idea what to do. I don't know. I don't know how to fix it. I don't have the expertise." One of the resources that we need to have if we're going to execute the vision is the expertise. We need to have capabilities. We may need to get some training. We may have some training but we also may need to get some more training. This is not just a business idea. This is a God idea that has been appropriated by business better than it's been appropriated sometimes by those of us who want to do ministry.

Then let's just say he said, "Well, I know exactly what to do but, oops, I forgot my tools. I don't have my toolbox with me." Well, then, okay. One of the resources you're going to need is you're going to need the right tools. Correct? Anyway, you can see how having the right resources is just so critically important.

You know, like at Man in the Mirror. Man in the Mirror, we realized this year that we've become too insular. One of the resources that we have really neglected is outside advisors. We put together a team of half a dozen outside advisors this year, just bringing fresh ideas into the ministry, into what we're doing. That's been successful.

Maybe it's marriage. Maybe you're trying to rebuild your marriage. Well, if you have ever tried to fix your marriage, you know that you don't have the capabilities to do that. One of the resources that you might consider is a counselor.

I had a one hour conversation with a man on the phone this week who's lacking meaning, purpose, a sense of direction. I asked him the same question I asked him six months ago when he was also dealing with some issues. I said, "Well, did you get into that small group that I suggested you get into?" He said, "No, I haven't found that yet." I said, "Well, that needs to be your priority. That's the resource that a man needs."

You know, I love talking to guys and so forth. I don't mind talking to men from Wichita or Sacramento or Kuala Lumpur. I don't mind talking to men and helping them work through their issues, but the bottom line is those calls would not be necessary if those men were in a small group doing life with a few other guys. Did you hear what I said? My phone would never ring if men would follow the advice and put together a resource group of a few guys and just do life together. My dream, rebuilding the country. You want to rebuild the country? My dream is that we'd figure out how to help men do life together with a few other men. We'll get to a little more of that in a moment.

Having the right resources, what are the resources that you need? You know, Nehemiah's outline and the resources that he needs here, what are the resources that you need to rebuild, that you need to

assemble? What are the resources you need to assemble to rebuild whatever it is that you're trying to rebuild? Preparation without prayer is presumption but also prayer without preparation is presumption so we need to be prepared with the right resources. Second, the right plan.

Chapter 2 verse 11 and I'm going to skip over verse 10 because that has to do with opposition and resistance and we're going to dive into that a little deeper how do you handle resistance and opposition, we'll dive into that a little deeper in one of the coming messages. Verse 11, so he says, Nehemiah, "I went to Jerusalem and after staying there three days, I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. By night, I went out to the valley gate through the jackal well and the dung gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem which had been broken down and its gates which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on toward the fountain gate and the king's pool but there was not enough room for my mount to get through so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the valley gate."

If you develop the wrong strategy or the wrong plan, it's going to be what? A lot of hard work. But if you choose the right strategy or plan, it's going to be what? A lot of hard work. See, this is the problem. Because of the fall, it doesn't make any difference if you choose the wrong strategy or the right strategy, whichever plan you choose and develop, it's going to be a lot of hard work. The problem with that is if you do pick the wrong plan, you won't know it for several years at which time you'll burn out not only yourself but all of your best players and that's likely that the crowd will be fallow for a few years as people try to recover before you go. You could waste a decade of your entire life just on this one decision, by selecting the wrong plan. It's very important to get the right plan.

Look how Nehemiah is going about getting the right plan. He is doing something that is very important. He is making a first-hand assessment. Anyone who's ever done a business plan knows that the first step of a good business plan is to understand the current situation. The way we do that, you can do it from your office or you get can get out of your office and go around and talk to your customers or talk to your children or go around the city and see where the problems are in the city or the nation. But to understand what's really going on, the current situation, that's the first step. It has to be done by a hands-on personal assessment, not out of your office in Washington, DC, but to get out into the field and actually make a first-hand assessment.

It's interesting because when I went to Asia, I had a lot of ideas about what was going on in Asia for God, what Asian people were like, even humorously, all the hacking that you hear about on the news. I was having a Skype call. I had Skype calls with several different groups that I was going to be meeting with and helping over there, but one group in Beijing, there were three men on the call and I asked them, I said, "You know, I've been reading all these articles about security of information and so forth and so I've got everything on my iPhone. I was thinking should I get another iPhone or another phone and leave my iPhone at home?" Very matter of fact, they said, "Well, we all have iPhones." Duh.

The idea is that you can make some very terrible decisions if you don't actually go out into the field and start talking to people and understand what's really going on. Of course there were all the cultural things, myths and stereotypes that I had about Asia and Asian people and God in Asia. All that's changed. Obviously, I don't have a complete understanding but I have a much better understanding because I got out of the office into the field. To develop the right plan, this is exactly what Nehemiah did. You want to rebuild? You want to rebuild something, what is it? Who do you need to talk to get more information, to understand what's really going on? That's the important step here.

I want to just park a little bit on this idea of rebuilding the country because that's the principle thing that Nehemiah is focused on here. As I say, these are all transferable principles to all these other things too. But you know, if we wanted to just stick with rebuilding a country, how are we going to do it? What are the things that we're going to find out? Is it going to be that we're going to be able to deregulate our way out of the problems we have or is it that we're going to be able to regulate our way out of the problems? Is it that we're going to borrow our way out of the problems or is it paying back the borrowing? Is that going to solve the problem? Paying back the deficit. Some people think paying back the deficit will solve all of our problems. Is it growing the economy or is it restoring law and order or is it winning the battle against terrorism? You know, is it tougher laws? Is it better, stronger defense? Are these really the things that are going to rebuild the country? Are these really the things that are going to rebuild the country? You know, how do any of those things address the core issues of divorce, fatherlessness, the breakup of the family, pornography, greed, racism, poverty? How do any of those things help rebuild the country?

When you get out and walk around and ask the questions and do the assessment, you have to come to the conclusion that if people don't learn how to love their neighbors, love the truth, and love righteousness, that nothing's going to change. How do people come to love their neighbors? How do people come to seek and love the truth? How do people get to the point where they can actually live out the righteous lives that I believe that most of them would love to be able to live? How do they do that? Well, the Bible is very clear. Nehemiah was rebuilding his country. The way his country needed to be rebuilt and the way that God has given us today to rebuild our country in the way that we want it to be rebuilt is to make disciples. In other words, however our nation got into this situation, the only solution is to disciple our way out.

Let's balance the budget. We'll still have all of these same problems that we have now. Let's defeat ISIS. We will still have virtually all of the same problems that we have now. If we really want to rebuild our nation, let's get at the character of people, the moral fiber of our country. Let's speak to the issues of the human heart. Let's raise up an army of new disciples. The solution is not just making disciples, but it's making disciples who are disciple-making disciples. In other words, it's this idea of not just helping people make their lives better, that, but also equipping them so they can turn around and reproduce their lives into the lives of others.

You want to rebuild a nation, you want to rebuild our nation, you want to rebuild your marriage, you want to rebuild your family, your business, your career, you become a disciple-making disciple. That's the way. That's the plan. That is God's plan. If making disciples is God's only plan to release the power of his gospel on every problem you face, on every problem our nation faces, on every problem, whatever it is, making disciples is the only solution that God has given us to release the power of His gospel on these problems. Making disciples is the right plan. It is the right plan. Anything else is presumption.

The big idea. Preparation without prayer is presumption. Likewise, prayer without preparation is presumption. Preparation for what? The right plan. The right plan is what? It's disciples making disciples. This is all I want to ... I don't really care about being remembered. Sean Connery is 86. I was looking that up this morning. When he made his last movie, he dropped off the radar. That's what I plan to do. I have no desire to be remembered but if I did, that's all I would want people to say about me is that his constant refrain, his constant emphasis, his singular focus is disciples making disciples. Hey, I said it here a thousand times probably before. I'll say it a thousand times again. Disciples not making disciples is an oxymoron. It's a nonsense statement. It's just internally inconsistent. It makes no sense. Oh my gosh. I'm getting carried away. I'm running upward.

The third thing you're going to need, you're going to need the right resources, the right plan, and you're also going to need the right team. Now, if you have the right leader who has the right vision, who assembles the right resources and develops the right plan, then he will have the ability to inspire the right team or could be a group of people that put this together in the beginning. Anyway, Nehemiah, after he had done his prayer, the burden of his heart evolved into a vision that God put in his mind. He presented it to the king. He got the resources. He's been out. He's assessed. He's made his plan. Now, he's ready to assemble his team.

Chapter 2 verse 16, "The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing because, as yet, I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or the nobles or officials or any of the others who would be doing the actual work. Then I said to them ..."

You know, it's important to pick the right moment. John Doerr, how many are familiar with John Doerr from Kleiner Perkins? Okay, this is a name that many people argue that he's the greatest venture capitalist who's ever lived. He was behind Netscape. He was behind Intuit. He was behind Sun Microsystems. He was behind Amazon. He was behind Google. They really came into prominence because of Facebook and Google.

Funny sidebar, one of our donors has invested in every Kleiner Perkins partnership since their origin so he's a pretty rich guy, a very rich guy. I'm talking to him on the phone one time when Google was bam, hitting. I mean, they were the hottest thing. Google was the hottest thing. The public offering and all that. He said, "Yeah, we own some Google." I said, "Really?" He said, "Oh yeah." I said, "You own some Google?" He said, "Yeah, through Kleiner Perkins," his partnership. I said, "Well, how much do you own?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "Well, can you find out?" He turned around. He yelled to somebody. He said, "Hey, Elaine. How much of Google do we own?" He came back and he said, "Elaine says we have 10% of it." Well, I was so embarrassed and intimidated. I didn't have enough nerve to ask him is 10% of Google or 10% of the Kleiner Perkins share of Google, obviously it was 10% of the Kleiner Perkins share of the investment. I mean, could you imagine even have 10% of a big share of Google at the beginning? The guy that made all that happen is John Doerr.

John Doerr, he was interviewed. He's in his 60s now. When he's 46 years old, he was interviewed by Fast Company Magazine. They were asking him what he looks for in making a good investment. He said, "Just imagine you've got some guys and gals meeting at a House of Pancakes to roll over a new idea and they want to you to go to the meeting. You're 28 years old. Should you go?" He said, "Sure." He said, "But before throwing in with a group, I'd advise that 28-year-old to think carefully about the opportunity, the markets, and the technology and think hardest about the team." He said, "What's in short supply today is great teams. Your biggest challenge in a startup," or in rebuilding a country, "will be building a great team." That's what he says that will be your biggest challenge. Teams win.

He was asked, "It's 11 o'clock, midnight, you're on your tenth cup of coffee. You look around the table trying to decide whether or not you want to throw in with this lot. How do you make your decision?" He said this. That's the moment of truth. "That's when you ask: Are these the people that I'm willing to get into trouble with over the next five to ten years? As you build a new business, one thing's for sure, you will get into trouble."

Assembling the right team is just so important. Look at this so much more, he says, about this. He talks about the most articulate team member, the leader, it's about how important it is for the leader to be articulate. That's exactly what Nehemiah does right here because in verse 70, "Then I said to them," this

is his inspirational recruiting speech, "You see the trouble we are in. Our walls are broken down and all that. Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned with fire. Come. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and well will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me, what the king had said to me." You know, the king gave him the resources. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this great work.

He was able to put together the right team. Hey, really quick. Which of these words do you most identify with? Innovator, adapter, adopter? Not which do you think would be more cool to identify with but what are you really? An innovator, an adapter. You see somebody else's idea and you adapt it. Or an adopter. You hear a vision and you can embrace it. Let me tell you the churches that we've worked with and the leaders that we work with. We find that the most successful are not the innovators see No Man Left Behind, our model, and they say, "Oh, well, I can come up with a better idea." Actually, no you can't. After developing the right plan for 25 years, 25 years of experience with thousands of churches, actually, you can't develop a better plan. You can develop a different plan that does the same thing but you can't develop a better plan. It's a model under continuous improvement so I'm not suggesting that it's perfect.

The people who are actually the most successful are the adopters and the mild adapters. There are two kinds of people adapting models: mild and, at the other end of the continuum, radical. You have mild adapters and radical adapters. The mild adapters actually do pretty well. They take the model and they make little mild adaptations to their situation and so forth. The mild adapters and the adopters, the people who hear it and say, "Okay, we're just going to do it," they're the ones who are successful.

When you're putting together a team, look, when you're putting together a team, it's important to know who you are because if you're an adopter, you may want to be part of somebody else's team. It probably would be better if you're truly not an innovator, it probably would be better for you to be part of somebody else's team. Make sure it's the right team. Then, if you are the innovator, then what you want to do is you don't want to put together ... The right team will not be, if the team is six people, it's not going to be six innovators. If you put six innovators together, you're going to have nothing but clash. You'll never agree on anything. Things to keep in mind.

Anyway, that's free. That didn't cost anything extra.

He gives this inspirational speech and recruits his team and the work begins. These are the three things you're going to need to get started. You're going to need the right resources, you're going to need the right plan, and you're going to need the right team. Again, the big idea today is this. Preparation without prayer is presumption and then, likewise today, prayer without preparation is presumption. These are the three pieces that need to be in place in terms of preparation for the work to begin. Once he had the burden converted into a vision through prayer and then he'd done these three things to get started today, he assembled the resources, developed a plan, and recruited the team, then it says the work was able to begin.

Where is the place that we try and rebuild? What is it that you're trying to rebuild? Have you considered what resources would be the right ones to have in order to do that or are you still trying to figure out how to rebuild your marriage with your own best thinking? That's a nonstarter. Or business problems or ministry problems without counselors. All of these different things, whether it's resources or developing the right plan, knowing how to develop the right plan, actually being out in the field and having the right information or this idea of putting together the right team.

John Doerr says, "Teams, teams, teams. I look for teams." If you want to rebuild, you need to either form a team or become part of a team. How are we going to rebuild the nation? Bottom line, how did I say if I did want to be remembered, which I don't care whether or not I am, what did I say I'd like to be remembered for? Disciples making disciples. If we're going to rebuild the nation, it's going to be because disciples are making disciples. In order to do that, we're going to need the right resources, the right plan, and then the right team.

Let us pray.

Our dearest Father, Lord, first of all, we are grateful for the book of Nehemiah, kind of a blueprint or a roadmap, step-by-step guide, really, on how to rebuild a nation. Lord, let us take these principles and apply them, help us to apply them to our lives, whether it's our desire to see a nation rebuild or whether it's some other thing that we've talked about here this morning or that is especially on the hearts and minds of the brothers. We ask this in Jesus' wonderful and His powerful name, amen.