# The First Steps Are The Best!

**When Believers Get a Vision**

Nehemiah 2:9-20

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1. **Introduction (Nehemiah 2:20)**
   1. **Most people are used to how they live**
      1. “When in Rome, do as the Romans do…” is what people say
      2. They see their way of living as normal – just like everyone around them
      3. Not knowing that they are living out of the will of God, away from God, ruined lives
   2. **But sometimes, some individuals see more – see themselves as a mess**
   3. **If any of us are going to start to live differently than we are used to living, it means that we will have to take a step in a direction we have never gone before – be uncertain how things are going to turn out – be no longer in control**
   4. **THAT step will often be the hardest step we ever take – and we will see it is if it is straight off a cliff**
      1. We would rather the devil we know, instead of the devil we don’t know
      2. Well, there is a THIRD option – trusting the LORD you know! And stepping out in obedience faith, knowing it will work for good, simply because God will help us!
   5. **Nehemiah wants to rebuild what sin had ruined**
   6. **But he needs the people to want to rebuild – he can’t do it alone!**
   7. **That’s where we pick up Nehemiah in chapter 2…**
2. **Review (Nehemiah 1:1-4; 2:4,5)**
   1. **Jerusalem is in Ruin since 606 BC**
      1. Surrounded and destroyed by king Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC
      2. No stone was left standing – all wealth and money and tools were taken away to far away Babylon
      3. It was God’s judgment – not some random event in history
         1. A long time coming
         2. The nation had been clearly WARNED by God, and by prophets
   2. **Zerubbabel & Ezra headed up the rebuilding of the Temple 70 years later in 536 BC**
      1. Only to face delay after delay – almost never got finished rebuilding the Temple
      2. And the broken city walls were never touched
   3. **Worship was hard, and God’s people were just discouraged**
   4. **So many of the Jews were content living in the ruin of an abandoned city**
      1. Constantly being robbed of their crops and hard labours
      2. Mocked and bullied by the surrounding nations
      3. No hope of ever being a free nation again
      4. They had settled that this was the kind of life that they would only ever have!
   5. **Someone Had to Take the Lead**
      1. Nehemiah had to act – this is what First Responders do (like Nurses and Doctors, and Garda, Paramedics, Firefighters) – they don’t hesitate – they ACT
      2. Total self-sacrifice – Jesus called it “denying yourself” (Mt 16:24)
      3. Have an absolute call to do what you are doing
      4. Commitment to the cause – to the call – to the need
      5. Stay to the Plan
         1. Nehemiah made a plan
         2. Was working through the plan – never gives up – stays the course
         3. Hard work, and little results at first – that’s expected
      6. Surround yourself with people who will help you
         1. Hey! Surround yourself with great men – people who will HELP you accomplish what God wants done – not constantly drag you and watch you do things all alone
         2. No bragging – ever – except about God’s helping you
         3. If anything gets accomplished, it will be because God and others helped you
      7. Have/get a track record of God’s hand and blessing in your life.
         1. Have some small victories that show God’s hand in your life
         2. Like answered prayers
         3. Like supernatural provision
   6. **So Nehemiah heads off to Jerusalem to rebuild the protective walls and gates around Jerusalem and to restore his nation, ONE BRICK AT A TIME!**
3. **Message**
   1. **“I Came”** (Nehemiah 2:9)
      1. Travelled 1,000 km from Shushan in Persia, all the way to the rubble and ruin of Jerusalem
         1. Normally we go on long trips to a holiday
         2. Or to a new exciting job
         3. Not very often to where we will have to start completely from scratch
         4. Kind of like becoming a church planting missionary
         5. Or starting a new ministry in church – starting with nothing
      2. This was a BIG accomplishment for Nehemiah
         1. He had grown up in Shushan, in Persia
         2. As a captive of Babylon
         3. Working in a dangerous job position that was cushy and pleasant
         4. And here he was, arriving into his own homecountry of Judah
      3. What brought him here? Five Things…
         1. **Pressure** - A God-given burden, deep pressure inside to DO something about what was wrong in Jerusalem
         2. **Prayer** – loads of it. And fasting, and seeking to know the will of God, and not just his own heart
         3. **Permission** – didn’t just up and leave, but got confirmation, by getting supernatural permission from the king Artaxerxes
         4. **Preparation** – made a plan, and then fully prepared to complete the impossible task of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem
         5. **Parting!** He had to put distance between himself and the Palace – he had to get moving! And he did! Travelled 1,000km!
   2. **Protected the Whole Way** (Nehemiah 2:9)
      1. Nehemiah had asked for protection – not arrogant, thinking he didn’t need protection
      2. It is very good to ask for and have protection
         1. Paul had protection on his most dangerous journey (Acts 23:17-24)
         2. Angels are given for our protection (Psalm 34:7) – how unaware we are of their efforts
   3. **The Enemy Was Upset** (Nehemiah 2:10)
      1. The coming of Nehemiah and his few men seriously grieved the enemies of Israel
         1. The very fact that Nehemiah had come, and was just present, WITH authority, really grieved the enemy
         2. They knew something was a foot! Nehemiah did not tell anybody there what he was planning – not yet
      2. Oh that OUR lives and plans upset OUR enemy!
      3. We don’t upset the devil because we are no threat to him nor his devices!
      4. Who was the enemy?
         1. Sanballat the Horonite – a Moabite governor
         2. Tobiah the servant – an Ammonite governor of Ammon – probably the second in charge
         3. These two were like Mafia bosses over the people that lived in Judah and Jerusalem
         4. There were more enemies than just these two, but these two stand out
      5. They hated everything about the Jews (sound familiar). And hated anything that worked towards their happiness and blessing
      6. These guys will show up again and again – they don’t just go away!
   4. **A Silent Survey** (Nehemiah 2:11-16)
      1. Came into to Jerusalem City
         1. Nehemiah has a small group with him – not very noticeable, nor attracting attention
         2. Didn’t say why to anybody
      2. Just started walking around – mainly at night, so as to not attract attention
         1. He only had one mule or maybe a horse – everyone else walked on foot around the city walls
         2. Privately viewing all the work that would be involved
      3. Surveyed for 3 days and 3 nights
         1. Valley Gate
         2. Dragon Well – a water fountain that water poured out of that looked like a dragon
         3. Dung Port – where the city waste was carried out and dumped
         4. Fountain Gate – a gateway leading out to another water fountain
         5. The King’s Pool
         6. The Brook Kidron that went alongside the city
         7. And then back again – he had seen enough
      4. It is one thing to look at maps and drawings of a plan – it is another to actually SEE the job that needed to be done
         1. He just let everything sink in, and affect him even deeper
         2. Adjusting and fine tuning his plans
      5. Probably did a lot of praying – seeking God’s wisdom and understanding to accomplish the task ahead
      6. That brings me to an important thought
         1. I have found that most people rely on the abilities and even the spirituality of other people
            1. Their pastor
            2. Their wife’s walk with God
            3. The devotion of their parents to God
         2. So, they DON’T really NEED to pray – don’t need God right now
         3. So, when things don’t go well
            1. And the company lets them go
            2. Or the husband or wife falls into sin
            3. Or when your parents let you down
            4. You will find yourself so angry!
            5. But the problem was that you left it to THEM to depend upon God and get God’s help and God’s wisdom!
         4. The truth is, if someone is a constant critic of everyone else, it is ONLY because they have been let down by everyone else, and never spent any length of time in REAL prayer for those they rely upon!
   5. **The Call to Rebuild** (Nehemiah 2:17,18)
      1. Then Came the Day…
         1. Waited for the right time to announce his plan
         2. Today was THE day!
         3. No turning back now!
         4. Nehemiah stood on the top of some pile of rubble
         5. Gathered as many people as were passing through the city streets
      2. This was a call
         1. To GOD’S people – not to the world outside, but to the people of God
         2. To ALL of God’s people – to the congregation – like a church
            1. NOT to the wealthy
            2. Not to the smart
            3. Not to the talented
            4. But for ALL to do their part
            5. No exemptions!
         3. For them to open their eyes
            1. See just how LOW they were living
            2. There was no one that wasn’t living ruined lives in the rubble – let that sink in
            3. They had gotten so used to living this way, that they were blind to it
            4. Willingly ignorant – willingly closed their eyes to the piles of rubble and ruin around them

Most families are so used to the arguing and fighting, they can’t imagine what a marriage would look like without it!

Most parents are so used to their children and teenagers telling them what they are going to do, that they couldn’t imagine ever being in charge of their homes!

Most addicts are so used to the lying, the stealing, the stinking, the needles, and the constant drowsiness that they don’t remember a time when they were clean and actually happy

* + - * 1. The job of a pastor is to OPEN people’s eyes to their own sin, and the consequences of it
      1. To decide to HATE the rubble – real repentance
         1. Actually become sick of it
         2. What a great thing to pray
         3. For you to detest your sinful way of living
         4. A cigarette in your hand
         5. Porn on your phone
         6. Pill in your mouth
         7. Bottle in your cabinet
         8. Oh that God’s people would become physically sick of their sin

Hos 2:6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

Pro 20:17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

* + - 1. To rise ABOVE the rubble
         1. To want MORE than than just to survive under the rubble and trash
         2. Not quit it
         3. Not leave it
         4. But to rebuild what sin and time has destroyed (Cf 1Peter 5:8)
      2. To do a good work (2:18)
         1. Jesus Christ began a good work in YOU (Philp 1:6)
      3. Challenged that small gathering to BUILD AGAIN WHAT SIN HAD RUINED!
  1. **The Response** (Nehemiah 2:18)
     1. They said SIX words “*Let us rise up and build*”
        1. Without the resolve to fulfil those six words, nothing will ever get done for God!
        2. We need to express these six words OURSELVES
     2. “THEY said…” - Not just one man
        1. Not just one man talking here – but everybody spoke at once!
        2. Very public
        3. They spoke to one another – not just to Nehemiah
        4. Such Unity
        5. Commitment to the cause
        6. Made sure they were loud enough for the enemy to hear! Not afraid!
     3. Strengthened their hands – encouraged each other, became as ONE MAN!
        1. Became strong together
        2. EXAMPLE of a Tug-o-War rope – Each aditional hand strengthens the other hands
     4. This was a great day
        1. Excitement spread throughout the city
        2. It had been a very long time since joy had been heard in the streets of Jerusalem
        3. Maybe the same in your home, or even in your heart!
        4. It is easy to get a vision, get excited
        5. It is much harder to STAY excited and stay the course
        6. They will discover this
           1. Don’t be in the delusion that how you feel is your reality
           2. Feelings are wonderful and a very important part of your well being
           3. But let the joy come, and let it go
           4. Just stay the course folks
        7. Jesus came along, and just asked His disciples, to Follow Him, no matter the cost
     5. By-the-way, there was a storm brewing on the horizon – always will show up as you endeavour to rebuild!
  2. **The Opposition** (Nehemiah 2:19)
     1. A Growing Opposition – now more enemies showed up
        1. Sanballat
        2. Tobiah
        3. The Ammonite
        4. Geshem the Arabian
     2. A Powerful Opposition – they were not just idle threats
        1. The enemy were very powerful over the lives of all the people
        2. Had been in power now for 160 years!
        3. Like demons in a heart, mind, life
     3. These were BULLIES of the worst sort
        1. They won’t just walk away
        2. Will put up a great fight
        3. Just like when Jesus cast out devils, the devils would tear the person – didn’t go quietly!
     4. The enemy began their mockery
        1. Despised them – hated everything about Nehemiah and the Jews
        2. Laughed at Nehemiah and the small crowd of excited believers – to scorn
           1. Laughed at their smallness
           2. Nehemiah and his small group of followers looked like Jesus and His disciples
           3. Like the Pharisees did to Jesus on the cross
        3. Questioned their motives
        4. Lied about them
        5. Tried to scare them by threatening them – valid threats
        6. They had been successful in the past with Ezra (another message in a few weeks)
     5. But thankfully it was not going to work this day!
        1. Opposition, persecution, obstacles OUGHT to unify us, organise us, excite us
        2. Evidently we are doing something GOOD and right!

* 1. **The Courage and Confidence of the Believer** (Nehemiah 2:20)
     1. Here is our Theme Verse for the whole year…
     2. Where did these people, these men, these families expect to find the courage to do this impossible task?
        1. Pr 28:1 *The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion*
        2. In the God of heaven “***The God of heaven, he will prosper us***”
           1. Find courage in God’s blessings and help – in whatever ways God chooses! He has intervened in amazing ways throughout history
           2. Josh 1:9  *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for* ***the LORD thy God*** *is with thee whithersoever thou goest*.
           3. 1Sam 30:6  *And David was greatly distressed; … the soul of all the people was grieved… but David encouraged himself* ***in the LORD his God***.
           4. 1Chr 28:20  *And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, … fear not, nor be dismayed: for* ***the LORD God, even my God****, will be with thee;* ***he*** *will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*...
           5. Just having God’s mighty hand resting upon us
           6. Like He did on Moses’ life
           7. It was important to just trust the promises of their God – that’s a BELIEVER
        3. In their RESOLVE – morale is 80% of any victory
           1. Make up your mind what you are going to do
           2. You will find courage in that decision – not before!
        4. In their uniqueness from the surrounding culture (Deut 7:6)
           1. The world around them had no portion in Jerusalem – owned nothing there! It ALL belonged to GOD and to God’s people! Still true today!
           2. Those demonic men had no place in these homes anymore, or in the HEARTS or MINDS or NATION of Israel!!!
           3. They had NO right to be there anymore
           4. No memorial to enjoy – this was THEIR home, their city, their history
           5. The surrounding world had no part of their culture or lives
           6. Deut 7:6  *For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*.
        5. So, there was no need for all the ecumenical mixing with unbelievers that goes on all the time today trying to get things done – Christians do it together

1. **Reflections and Invitation**
   1. **What brought to this place TODAY?**
      1. **Pressure?** A God-given burden, deep pressure inside to DO something about what is wrong in your life and home and heart?
      2. **Prayer?** Loads of it. And fasting, and seeking to know the will of God?
      3. **Purpose/Determination?** To live above the rubble?
   2. **Take Good Look at YOUR Project to Fix**
      1. Do you only worry about fixing broken smartphones?
      2. Take A Silent Survey OF…
         1. Your way of thinking – 2Cor 10:5
         2. Your anger
         3. Your home
         4. Your own spiritual life – in ruins
         5. Your testimony
         6. Your debt
         7. Your addiction
         8. Your children
      3. Don’t talk to anybody until you have a burden to take the lead and start rebuilding
      4. Let everything sink in, and affect you deeply
      5. Start making a plan
      6. Then take the time needed to read about why things are in rubble – there is ALWAYAS history, so find out what went wrong
      7. Adjust and fine tune your plan
      8. Do a lot of praying – seek God’s wisdom and understanding to accomplish the task ahead
      9. YOU need to depend upon God for a miracle in your home and family
   3. **The Call to Rebuild is**
      1. To GOD’S people – not to the world outside, but to the people of God
      2. To ALL of God’s people – to the congregation – like a church
         1. NOT to the wealthy
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      3. For YOU to open your eyes
         1. See just how LOW you are living
         2. There is no one that isn’t living ruined lives in the rubble – let that sink in
         3. Have you gotten so used to living this way, that you, like the Jews are blind to it?
         4. Don’t be WILLINGLY ignorant – closing your eyes to the piles of rubble and ruin around you
            1. Most families are so used to the arguing and fighting, they can’t imagine what a marriage would look like without it!
            2. Most parents are so used to their children and teenagers telling them what they are going to do, that they couldn’t imagine ever being in charge of their homes!
            3. Most addicts are so used to the lying, the stealing, the stinking, the needles, and the constant drowsiness that they don’t remember a time when they were clean and actually happy
         5. The job of a pastor is to OPEN people’s eyes to their own sin, and the consequences of it – I PRAY THAT I HAVE CRACKED SOME OPEN!
      4. To decide to HATE the rubble – real repentance
         1. Actually become sick of it
         2. What a great thing to pray
         3. For you to detest your sinful way of living
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         4. But to rebuild what sin and time has destroyed (Cf 1Peter 5:8)
      6. To do a good work (2:18)
         1. Jesus Christ began a good work in YOU (Philp 1:6)
      7. To BUILD AGAIN – this will be real revival!
2. **Final Questions…**
   1. **What will be YOUR Response to this Call?**
      1. Six words “Let us rise up and build”
      2. Without the resolve to fulfil those six words, nothing will ever get done for God!
      3. We need to express these six words OURSELVES
   2. **Someone Has to Take the Lead – WILL IT BE YOU?**
      1. Pride will keep almost all of us from taking the lead to fix whatever is broken at home, or in our nation
      2. Only Self-sacrifice can repair a broken home/world (Jesus called it denying yourself)
      3. Become committed to the cause – to the call – to the need
      4. make a plan
      5. Works through the plan – never gives up – stays the course that the BIBLE lays out
      6. Hard work, and little results at first
      7. Surround yourself with great men / women – people who will HELP you accomplish what God wants done – not constantly drag you and watch you do things all alone
   3. **Is anyone willing to rebuild and restore YOUR HOME, your life, ONE BRICK AT A TIME? One Step at a time? According to THIS plan? The Bible way?**
   4. **God will make a way, if you are willing to walk it!!! Will you believe that?**
   5. **By the way, there are SOME things that no one can fix – only JESUS**
      1. Your sin record – no one can go back and erase them
      2. Only Jesus can pay for them all – that’s exactly what He did on the cross!
      3. Ask Him to apply that forgiveness to YOUR broken heart, your shameful guilt, your sinful record
      4. And be born again today!