



Nehemiah: A man on a mission

Neh 6:15-19

(15) So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. (16) And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God. (17) Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. (18) For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. (19) Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

When Nehemiah heard his people were in great affliction and reproach (1:1-3), he set his mind to help. He prayed for God's help and then was afforded the opportunity and provisions to go help them. He was on a mission. His mission was one of compassion and determination for the people of God. Upon arrival in the city, he found much to do and few to do it. The account of the rebuilding of the wall of the city is one for us to study and apply to our lives today but the completion of the wall in 52 days was only the beginning of his work. Nehemiah records for us the real work was in bringing the people back to God in life and love as His people. He gives us a glimpse of the problems he faced in this selection of scripture above. He had trouble in the camp with the people aligning themselves with those that opposed their wellbeing and those who were only out for personal gain. Nehemiah spent twelve years working with the people only to find out later that they had gone back to their former ways of allowing people to take advantage of them. We should learn so much from this great man and his mission of service and being a servant to his people.

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We are a congregation of the Lord's people looking for you. We desire to love our community and neighbors as our Lord has taught us to do. Please allow us to be an encouragement to you as you are an encouragement to us by visiting with us today.

If you have any questions about anything you see or hear today, please stop someone and ask questions. We are seeking to be New Testament Christians, and as such we desire to share what we have been given. We want to be ready to give you an answer for what we do and say (1 Peter 3:15)

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Thank you for being our Guest today!

Practicing “Paul”

Glenn Colley



Life is like a Camera...

Focus on what's
important,

Capture the good times,

Develop from the
Negatives,

And if things don't work
out,

TAKE ANOTHER SHOT!

In 1 Corinthians 4:16 Paul wrote, *“Wherefore I exhort you to be imitators of me...”*, and in Chapter 11:1 he penned, *“Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*

That is good advice for us. Walk through 1 Corinthians with me and consider some traits of Paul we ought to practice.

In his message and his motives, he was totally loyal to Jesus Christ. *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”* (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Clearly a man may have right motives and a wrong message, or the right message and a wrong motive. Paul was loyal on both counts.

He practiced self-denial out of a love for lost souls. *“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you”* (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Paul did not suggest here that we should compromise principles of faith in order to convert people, but rather matters of indifference. He put others above himself and his preferences.

He practiced self-discipline out of a love for his own soul. *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”* (1 Corinthians 9:27). Some become their own worst enemy. We can never expect to have God's approval as Christians without self-restraint. Just because I'm tempted to sin doesn't mean I have a license to commit the sin (Romans 6:1).

He practiced self-restraint in the church out of a love for teaching truth and welfare of the whole church. *“Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue”* (1 Corinthians 14:19). While speaking the “ten thousand words” might have shown people Paul's impressive abilities, Paul didn't care about that. The praise of men was nothing when compared to the teaching of the lost and the stability of the church. Pride is what makes men ineffective today. They simply lose track of what is really important.

He practiced humility out of a love for God's grace. *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me”* (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

Life has no remote – get up and change it yourself!

The Century Plant

The century plant is a large species located in the southwest United States. Contrary to its name, the century plant only lives about 25-30 years. During that time, it grows to about ten feet high and about the same distance around. It may not be the prettiest plant in town, but it certainly makes its presence known. Yet, what make the century plant unique is not seen until the end of its lifecycle. As it nears death, the plant begins to grow a stalk out of its center. This stalk can grow to be as much as thirty feet high, and at its peak are the only blossoms the century plant will ever produce. The plant dies shortly after these blossoms reach full bloom. Yet, this is not the end of the century plant, for at its base new shoots begin to rise from the dry desert ground. In a sense, it could be said that the century plant exists in order to bring about the next generation of life.

This reminds me a lot of Jesus. He walked this earth as a common looking, no frills, kind of guy. In other words, he wasn't the prettiest plant in the garden, but he had a big presence. His earthly lifecycle came to an end with a tall tree-like stalk...a cross. As Jesus hung from this cross the greatest effect of his ministry was coming into full blossom, that is, the restoration of his beloved creation. His resurrection from death results in new shoots that have continued to rise from the parched desert of life for over 2,000 years. Like the century plant, Jesus' life is lived in order to bring about the next generation of life for all who will trust in him.

It may be that your life is feeling like a desert right now, either through sin, loss, or tests. In these times it is easy to lose sight of hope for the future. Yet, the cross of Jesus, like the century plant, gives us a vision of hope that life continues, even in desert places. Look to him and he will bring you through this time. It may not be with rushing rivers of relief or showers of cool blessings. It may come in the form of just enough water to survive. But make no mistake, life in the Son goes on.

--selected

A man had just finished reading the book, *Man of the House*, while riding the commuter train home from work.

When he arrived home, he stormed into the house and walked directly up to his wife. Pointing his finger in her face, he said, "From now on I want you to know that I am the man of this house, and my word is law! You are to prepare me a gourmet meal tonight, and when I'm finished eating my meal, I expect a sumptuous dessert afterward. Then, after dinner, you're going to draw my bath so I can relax. And when I'm finished with my bath, guess who's going to dress me and comb my hair?"

His wife sternly responded, "My guess would be the funeral director."

Reminder:
Being the man of the house is not a physical job only...it is also a spiritual responsibility!
Learn & Live wisely

This Week's Q&A

Q: How many characters are in the Bible?

A: According to the Biographical Bible, 2nd Edition, there are 3,237 Bible characters named in the Scriptures, with 1,443 characters who do not have unique names (e.g., there are 4 Benjamins, 14 Josephs, and 31 Zechariahs named), Contrast the people in the Bible with a recent advertising campaign using a fictional character named "the most interesting man in the world." Surely, the Bible is filled with the most interesting people that have truly changed the world!

The Bible is filled with characters, literally and figuratively.

Perhaps the best way to describe how the Bible portrays its characters is "human" because they are, in fact, human.

The Bible is true, and the people that inhabit its pages were real people with real lives, real relationships, real joys, and real problems, just like us. The Bible does not shy away from presenting both the strengths and weaknesses of those it portrays. This makes the characters in the Bible "practical" in the sense that we can relate to them and educational in the sense that we can learn from their successes and failures.

Forgive your enemy – it messes with their head.



PUNCHING HOLES IN THE DARKNESS

Brett Petrillo

A young boy had his face pinned to the window and he watched with fascination as an old lamplighter came down the street. One by one he was lighting the old-fashioned gas street lamps. Excited, the young boy called out to his grandmother, "Nana! Nana! Come quickly. There is a man outside who is punching holes in the darkness!"

At its most simple, the responsibility of Christians is to punch holes into the darkness of this world. Without the righteousness and morality that God has instilled, there is no other way to truly break up the darkness in this life. We can't do this by our own light, but by the light we reflect from the sun by living right.

Jesus said it clearly, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

We've heard these words before, now let's live them. The world isn't getting any brighter. Let's punch holes in the darkness.

Salvation is something we receive, not achieve.

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Mail me to
someone
who might
read me!