

“Just Another Brick In The Wall”
January 31, 2010 * Nehemiah 3

TIME has done it again.

No matter how we were wired genetically, what else shapes our drive and ambition just as much?

The Big Question: What types of people will help us with building up our lives in good and godly directions?

I. (Vs.1) Look for leaders who _____.
Spend time with those who are _____ and _____ than you.

A. What’s significant about the high priest being mentioned first? How does this reflect Jesus’ words about leadership?

B. What should a church have in it?

C. The leaders of Tekoa though wouldn’t join the work. What was true of the Tekoans six centuries later?

II. (Vss.7-8) Hang out with people who show the desire to serve more than their own _____.

A. How do we learn this lesson in these verses?

B. If you truly want to be happy in life, what ought to be true?

III. (Vss.10, 12) For building your life well, be part of a community that places high value on _____.

A. Doesn’t this negate the point we made about self-interest?

B. How was Nehemiah’s strategy here, of having people repair the wall closest to their homes, brilliant?

C. Can wounds suffered from our families ever be healed?

IV. (Vss.14) Hang out with people who serve God with a _____ heart.

A. What did Malkijah get to do?

B. If I only accept the plum assignments, what won’t God do?

C. Is there an assignment God gives that is ever unimportant?

V. (Vs.20) Hang out with people who have earned a _____ for themselves.

A. What is unique about how Nehemiah describes Baruch?

B. If only one word could be used to describe me, what might it be?

VI. To get anywhere in life we must learn to _____ people, period.

An Assignment For This Week:

“Just Another Brick In The Wall” **January 31, 2010 * Nehemiah 3**

TIME has done it again.

No matter how we were wired genetically, what else shapes our drive and ambition just as much?

The family that raised us and the culture that produced our family.

The Big Question: What types of people will help us with building up our lives in good and godly directions?

I. (Vs.1) Look for leaders who leading by example. Spend time with those who are stronger and wiser than you.

A. What’s significant about the high priest being mentioned first? How does this reflect Jesus’ words about leadership?

Back then, the high priest was the top dog among society’s leaders, and the other priests, were just a notch or two below the high priest in terms of importance and influence. It’s appropriate that Nehemiah begins his record by pointing out that the leaders were leading the way in this rebuilding project. “Whoever wants to be great among you,” Jesus said, “must be a servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” Then Jesus pointed to himself as exhibit A. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43-45). The high priest was doing this.

B. What should a church have in it?

Since in Christianity, leaders are called to live lives that are accessible and transparent to others, a church ought to be a place where a young believer, or a struggling believer can find models, mentors, examples of how life is to be lived in a Christ-honoring way.

C. The leaders of Tekoa though wouldn’t join the work. What was true of the Tekoans six centuries later?

Here are leaders who are not leading. And I found it utterly fascinating to learn in my study that six centuries later during the Jewish rebellion against Rome led by the great warrior Bar Kokhba, that when he summoned the men of Tekoa to join him in battle, they would not come. They could not be bothered. Bar Kokhba would later order their homes burned for their insolence. But I had to wonder, was this a case of bad behavior being passed on, one generation to another?

II. (Vss.7-8) Hang out with people who show the desire to serve more than their own self-interest.

A. How do we learn this lesson in these verses?

In verse 7 we see a group of people working on the walls of Jerusalem who don’t even live there. They are people who live well north of Jerusalem, in a place under another governor’s jurisdiction. Technically, they didn’t have to be here doing this back-breaking work. But they were. Why would they suffer such inconvenience and offer such sacrifice for something that they wouldn’t even really get to benefit from themselves? Once they left and went back home, what gain would they get from doing this? The gain of sharing in something greater than themselves. There are some things in life that are greater than ourselves and our own livelihoods and our own personal safety and comfort. There are ideas greater than ourselves.

B. If you truly want to be happy in life, what ought to be true?

Studies have shown that “people who focus on achieving wealth and career advancement are less happy than those who focus on good works, religion or spirituality, or friends and family.” Said a philanthropist: “The most selfish thing you can do is to help other people.” Get it? If all you think about is yourself and your own happiness, then the best way to achieve that? Help others. Didn’t Jesus say as much? “Those who lose their lives for me, find them.”

III. (Vss.10, 12) For building your life well, be part of a community that places high value on the family.

A. Doesn't this negate the point we made about self-interest?

We never said that self-interest was wrong. The Bible commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Paul in Philippians 2:4 said, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Of course, look after your own interests, go on a vacation, treat yourself to a steak dinner, buy yourself a new outfit. It's not sin. Enjoy your life. But keep the balance.

B. How was Nehemiah's strategy here, of having people repair the wall closest to their homes, brilliant?

Nehemiah understood something about human nature – that if we perceive that our families have a stake in what's going on, that there is a benefit here for me and my family, then we'll work all the harder at it.

C. Can wounds suffered from our families ever be healed?

If you never had a father who gave you the sort of love and validation you soul longed for, where can you ever find another father? Thank goodness because of Jesus Christ we have the opportunity to get to know and love a God who invites us to climb up into his lap as a heavenly father. And if you're family was a dysfunctional mess, where can you ever find another family? Thank goodness because of Jesus Christ, we have an opportunity to belong to a surrogate family called the church that can help us find some of that healing.

IV. (Vss.14) Hang out with people who serve God with a humble heart.

A. What did Malkijah get to do?

Repair the 'dung gate'.

B. If I only accept the plum assignments, what won't God do?

One of the truths I learned about God early in life was that until I was willing to accept assignments that were not exactly what you'd call the "plum" assignments, until I was willing to humbly work

and serve him behind the scenes, he would not raise me up to other assignments.

C. Is there an assignment God gives that is ever unimportant?

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12 that the parts of our body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. If Malkijah doesn't get that Dung Gate fixed, the people of Jerusalem, why their lives are going in the crapper, no pun intended. Well... I can preach a whale of a sermon and the worship team can rock it out for Jesus, but if we don't have someone in the nursery, and we don't have ushers and greeters in place, and there's no one to make coffee for coffee hour, or to clean up afterwards, what good will it be in the end. Each of these ministries has a place, and a point, and contributes mightily to what God wants to do here.

V. (Vs.20) Hang out with people who have earned a good name for themselves.

A. What is unique about how Nehemiah describes Baruch?

He describes him with the word "zealously". He's the only one in this long list to which Nehemiah attaches a descriptor.

B. If only one word could be used to describe me, what might it be?

VI. To get anywhere in life we must learn to value people, period.

Rehum, son of Bani, Binnui son of Henadad, Pedaiiah son of parosh, Zadok son of Immer. Big deal. They were a big deal, to God. Each and every one of them was a unique life, with their own heartbeat, their own brain, their own soul, their own set of eyes with which they gazed upon this earth, their own set of vocal cords with which they spoke, their own fingers which felt. Their life mattered. Their time on this earth mattered.

An Assignment For This Week:

Write your own personal Nehemiah chapter 3.