

## MONDAY MANNA

7 August 2017

### 5 STEPS TO SUCCESS, MODELLED BY NEHEMIAH

By Rick Boxx

Some people view the Bible strictly as a religious book, failing to see its relevance for every day. However, it can serve as a very practical, common sense guide for any aspect of life – including the business and professional world. No better example could be cited than the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. A trusted adviser to Persian king Artaxerxes in the 5th century B.C., he dreamed of rebuilding Jerusalem, reduced to mostly rubble for more than 140 years. The account of Nehemiah shows five key steps he took that paved the way for restoring the city:

- 1. Prayerful assessment.** Learning Jerusalem was in ruins, Nehemiah's heart broke. He prayed fervently before approaching the king to ask his blessing to pursue the reconstruction project. After receiving approval, Nehemiah then went to Jerusalem and quietly assessed the damage for three days before taking action. Nehemiah 2:13 states, *"So I went out at night...inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire."* If you desire a new project or your team to be successful, start with prayer, then objectively assess the situation.
- 2. A compelling vision.** For nearly a century and a half, no one had revived the city of Jerusalem; few people believed it was possible, or even necessary. Nehemiah, however, had a much bigger vision. For it to become reality, he needed the locals to catch his vision. He said to the people, *"You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace"* (Nehemiah 2:17). If you desire a team to follow you, communicating a compelling vision for the future is crucial.
- 3. Find the right leaders for leverage.** In those days, the high priest was very powerful. If that leader did not participate, few would follow. Along with the high priest, Nehemiah knew local business leaders would be very influential. With God's help, he managed not only to engage business leaders in rebuilding certain sections of the wall, but also convinced Eliashib, the high priest, to lead the charge. Nehemiah 3:1 tells us, *"Eliashib, the high priest, and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate."* To form a strong team that gets results, recruit and leverage people of influence.
- 4. Build collaborative teams.** More than 40 sections of the wall around Jerusalem needed repair. Each team could have focused on their piece of the wall, but without collaboration their section would become an island easily toppled. They needed to work together – to accomplish the bigger goal of rebuilding the wall, and to fight off enemies. *"From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armour"* (Nehemiah 4:16). With collaborative teams, Nehemiah overcame opposition. If you desire a strong successful organisation, build teams that work together.
- 5. Encourage commitment and accountability.** When adversity comes, teams either fall apart or become stronger together. A good leader recognises this and addresses adverse situations accordingly. Nehemiah and his team received multiple death threats; they were understandably scared. Nehemiah was at risk of losing his workers without their strong commitment. He encouraged them by saying, *"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes"* (Nehemiah 4:14). He later encountered internal conflict as well, requiring that he hold his leaders accountable to God's standards. If you desire a successful project or business, encourage commitment and accountability.

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

What do you think of using the Bible as a guidebook for everyday practical matters in the business and professional world? Do you agree its principles are useful for the workplace? Why or why not?

The first step in Nehemiah's success in the effort to rebuild the ancient city of Jerusalem was prayerful assessment. Have you ever taken that approach when preparing to start a major project, praying before moving into action? Explain your answer.

How do you respond to the progression of steps Nehemiah followed as he pursued the reconstruction of Jerusalem? Are there any of the steps that you would consider unnecessary? If so, why?

Why can it be difficult to build collaborative teams having strong commitment that are willing to submit to accountability in their performance?

*NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:*

Proverbs 27:17, 29:18

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Philippians 4:6-7

1 Thessalonians 5:17

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