

# A Step-By-Step Guide For Rebuilding a Country

## Creating Early Momentum

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning, men. If you would, please open your Bibles to Nehemiah, chapter three. As you do that let's go ahead and mention that we're doing a new series here, third week, third session, a step by step guide for rebuilding a country. We'll begin though by doing a shout out to ten men who are meeting weekly at the church, Living Hope Community Church. They call themselves Men of Hope in Bartonville, Illinois. They meet at 7:30 PM on Wednesdays. Dan Archdale is their leader and Mike Flynn is your Field Rep, in case you don't know that. You probably do. Thank you, Dan, for your leadership.

Dan wrote something very interesting. We always ask them to give a little description of their group. He wrote, "Young to middle aged men. We are growing in our understanding of how God has made us to be used for his glory." I just thought that was beautifully put. I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm and a rousing Man in the Mirror welcome to Men of Hope? One, two, three, Hoorah. Welcome guys. We are honored and pleased to have you as part of our Bible study.

The series is a step to step guide for rebuilding a country. You may have recalled last time that I said making disciples is God's only plan to release the power of his gospel on all of the problems we face, everything we might want to rebuild, whether it's a country, a business, a community, a marriage, a family, even ourselves.

By way of review, the first week we looked at this, this message was the first step: what does God want you to do. We talked about how it starts with the burdens that God gives us and then the vision that we gain through prayer. Then we looked at the sadness and the fear that Nehemiah was experiencing as he was developing the vision or God was giving them the vision. We talked about being determined to act even as you feel sadness and fear. The big idea, the first step to every great outcome is to imagine its possibility.

In the second lesson we talked about the three things that you'll need to get started. You'll need to have the right resources, the right plan and the right team. As the first message dealt with more of the prayer part of it, getting the vision, we said that preparation without prayer is presumption, but then also likewise we saw last week how prayer without preparation is also presumption.

Now we want to roll into Nehemiah, chapter three. Just as a reminder, look back a few verses, back into chapter two where we left off last time, verse 17. Nehemiah said, "Then I said to them, "You see the trouble that 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." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work."

This week we're going to talk about creating early momentum and how that takes place. As most of you know each week when I prepare a message I use a worksheet that I spent 30 years, I won't say perfecting, but I'll say developing. It's perfect for me thought. The title of this worksheet is "Grace Based Application Oriented Bible Study Preparation Worksheet Short Form". That's what happens when you spend that many years coming up with a name. The questions that I over the years have developed really help me focus on not what I might want to say, but what God is trying to communicate through a particular text. Some of the questions, "What is the situation that brought this text into existence? Why did the Holy Spirit preserve this text? Is there something we learn from this text that we would otherwise probably never know?"

As we go into this text this morning, the first thing I want us to see, when we want to rebuild a country or whatever it is that our vision is for, we want to be able to get the ball rolling. We want to be able to create some early momentum. We do that by this idea, inspire by dreaming big, but mobilize by starting small. What we're going to see in this text is that this problem, this thing that was going on, the reason the Holy Spirit wanted to preserve this text is that Israel was stuck. They had been stuck for 100 years. There was an inertia among not only the nation but the people of the nation, the psyche of the nation. There was an inertia, they couldn't get moving. Some of you who are scientists know that the greatest amount of energy required in nature is that amount of energy that's required to put a stationary object in motion, in other words, overcoming inertia. In nature that's the most difficult thing to do.

These people were stuck. Nehemiah being a great leader as it turns out, wanted to mobilize the people but he understood that even though the vision had to be big to rebuild the nation. "Our walls are broken down, our gates have been burned down, our nation is in ruins. Come and let us rebuild." In addition to having a big vision he also understood that he needed to start small. In fact I'll go ahead and give you the big idea for the day. The big idea for the day is this, and we're going to look into this a little bit further here. Dream unbelievably big, but start believable small. Dream unbelievably big, because if you don't do that you won't inspire people to get on board. Then if you actually want to create some momentum and mobilize you have to actually start believably small.

Nehemiah understood this. What is it that Nehemiah did? Well he had this incredible vision to rebuild the country that God had given him through prayer. He had this great vision to rebuild the nation, but then we see that he starts by picking a project that while it is ambitious, they were able to actually do this project in 52 days. Now we'll get to that later in the series. They actually accomplished the rebuilding of this wall in 52 days, and that's because he was able to inspire everybody to get involved. It was a cooperative effort. As we read these first few verses in Nehemiah, chapter three, you're going to see that he was able to get everybody involved, all walks of life, priests, businessmen, merchants, goldsmiths, perfume makers, people from inside the city and people that lived in the outlying areas, people from all walks of life, men and women alike. He was able to inspire them with this great vision that, "We can do this! We can rebuild our country."

I just couldn't help but think about, and this is not a political statement, but I couldn't help think about the slogan of President Donald Trump when he said, "Make America Great Again." In other words, no matter which party or which side of that argument you're on, you would have to agree that that statement by itself, it's inspiring. That's the kind of thing that Nehemiah was doing, he was inspiring the people with an unbelievably big idea, a big dream, a big vision.

How did he do this? Well he didn't just walk in one day and ... You know in business you have to go through the steps. You don't start out in the stock group and then become the CEO, you go through the

chairs. Well he had done this. Nehemiah had credibility when he announced his vision because he had official authorization from the king, he had assembled the resources, the timber and so forth that needed to be made, he had made a proper assessment of the situation. He had been moving around the city, so he understood the work that needed to be done. When he spoke his unbelievably big vision, it had the ring not only of excitement, but it also had the ring that "Maybe we could do this."

Then, the genius of this is how he was able to then break it down into what we see here in Nehemiah three. "Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and they rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel." Now, the details of this are not as important, well I mean they're very important, but they're not as important I don't think as seeing the fact that there are no gaps in this wall. There are no gaps in this wall, and that's because the vision inspired a response from everybody, but then he broke it down into these little pieces. He must have been a great administrator, Nehemiah.

Must've been a great administrator. He broke it down into these little pieces and he got people to work. Many of these people were working on the gaps in the wall right in front of their house, so they had that additional vested interest in it. Then he was able to recruit groups of people from out of town to come in. Some were big groups, so he gave them big chunks of the wall. Some were small groups, so he gave them small chunks of the wall. Notice that he starts by giving a report here of the work he gave the priests to do. Those people who are serving God, they're the ones that really should be out front setting the example, and here they are.

Verse two, "The men of Jericho", Jericho is quite a ways away, they "built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of", and on it goes. Look at verse five. "The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors."

Now just think about this, all of these names, all of these people who did this work, this must've been very important work. Their names are in the Bible, it's now thousands of years later and we're reading these names that have been memorialized in the very word of God. Why did all these people respond? Why did all these people respond? Number one, they responded because they were in great trouble, as I say, they were stuck. Their walls were broken down. The nation lay in ruins. That's part of it, that's part of why they responded. The other reason that they responded is that Nehemiah made this unbelievably big dream believably small enough that they could visualize themselves actually doing it.

When you want to create some momentum the thing here to remember is that we inspire by dreaming big, but we mobilize by starting small. Think big idea today, dream unbelievably big but start believably small. Well how did Jesus do it? Jesus did the exact same thing. He had this unbelievably big dream, total global conquest. That's the dream that Jesus brought, but he also made it believably small. Think about this, Jesus came to the earth for the purpose of total global conquest, and then his strategy was to start a small group and die. He did make it believably small.

He cast this great vision, but then he invited these 12 men to hang out. He invited these 12 men to hang out that they might be with him and that they might learn from him. Then he gave them small assignments, sending out the 12, sending out the 72 and all these things. He gave them these small

assignments and they began to grow. Jesus also followed this pattern of Nehemiah. Why did the disciples respond? For the same reason. They were in trouble too. They were stuck. The Roman oppression was severe. They were stuck. The nation, the country, the people of God, they were stuck. Not only that, they had a leader who was able to make the unbelievably big dream believably small. They could picture themselves actually doing the work and being successful.

That's what Nehemiah did, that's what Jesus did. Well what could we do? What can you and I do? You can have a big dream, but maybe you're not a dreamer. If you're not a dreamer, there are dreamers and doers, you can attach yourselves to a big dream. Find somebody who has a vision, who has a dream that's unbelievably big that intoxicates you, that gets you amped up, ramped up, fired up and passionate, but not just when you hear it, but two days later that when you're still feeling the passion and two months later when you're still feeling the zeal and two years later when you still have the same amount of commitment to the vision, then that's the vision for you whether it's yours or somebody else's.

Then get small. Dream big, but then get small. Get believably small. It might be ... This is believably small, "Hey I've got this book that I've read that really meant a lot to me. Would you like a copy? Hey, I'd like to get to know you. Can we go have a cup of coffee sometime and just talk?" This is unbelievably small, believably small, this is believably small. The unbelievable thing is that this marriage will never work. This is believably small: "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" You see? That's how you create momentum for real change, is you just start believably small. Maybe it's, "How can I help you?"

I've got friend that every time I talk to him, well he's not around anymore, he has dementia, Bob Buford. Bob Buford, every time I've ever talked, he's been a friend for a long, long time, we collaborate with ministries, we've sold more of his book than he has. Did you know that? Man in the Mirror has sold more Halftime books than the publisher. We've done over a quarter of a million of his books. We're good friends. Every time I've ever talked to Bobby he's ended every conversation with, "Okay, well how can I help you?" That's just his MO. He's taking the big and he's trying to figure out how to make it actionable, how to actually mobilize and do something.

At Man in the Mirror we have this huge, huge unbelievable vision. We actually, our vision, our dream, our unbelievably big dream is for spiritual revival and awakening in America. Our BHAG is ten million new disciples, new men leading powerful lives transformed by Jesus Christ by 2025. It's exciting and we have enough track record. We've helped 35,000 churches impact 12 million men. We want to do the deep work now and see 10 million men become transformed in their discipleship. I mean we're like Nehemiah, we've got a little bit of track record, a little bit of credibility, but still it's unbelievably big.

A lot of people get intoxicated along with us when they think about the idea that, "Oh my gosh, could we rebuild our country? Could we rebuild our country? Could reaching ten million men lead us to a tipping point? Could it lead us to a tipping point?" It's very exciting. Then if you just left it there you would have these people going out and they would just be excited but they would run out of gas because there's nothing believably small they could do about it. We have four ways that a man can get involved in the vision.

This is on our website, it's at [disciplemen.org](http://disciplemen.org), you can go to [disciplemen.org](http://disciplemen.org) too. The first way is to become a disciple. If you want to see spiritual revival the first step is become a disciple. The second is disciple others, either one on one or a small group. The third way is help your church figure out how to disciple men using No Man Left Behind and the Journey to Biblical Manhood. The fourth way is to

volunteer for our field team, become part of our field team and help reach your community or part of your community, multiple churches. Those are some believable steps that you can take. Whether it's in your marriage or in your business, dream unbelievably big, but make sure of course that you start believably small.

Let's move on here. One more thing that we see in this text, and I've gotten it written here next too, "is there something we learn from this text that we would otherwise never know?" The problem I think that God is trying to solve in this text is this problem. Okay, so that's another question on the guide, "What is the problem that God is trying to solve with this text?", I think this is it. We hear these big visions and we think, "I love that vision, but what difference could I make? I'm just one guy." It's the old argument, "One vote makes a difference", that whole thing in trying to get people to believe that their vote actually makes a difference and so forth, it's the same argument but in the spiritual realm.

What difference could my contribution possibly make? I think what we see in this text, what we learn from this text we'd otherwise never know, every contribution is important no matter how big or small. We're not going to read through all of this chapter because I can't pronounce all these names, but as you look through the rest of this chapter you see all these people that one time mentions their name. We don't know where they came from, we don't know where they went, but they were able to fill in some part of the gap. No contribution is too small or unimportant, or otherwise there will be a gap in the wall.

If you don't do your part, if you don't get inspired and play your part, if you don't rebuild your part of the wall, you see, then there's going to be a gap in the wall. The idea is that I think one of the things for sure, one of the problems God is trying to solve is he wants us to see that no matter how big or small the contribution is, every contribution makes a difference. Every contribution fills in part of the wall. Every contribution fills in part of the gap. If we don't build that part of the wall then, one in the case of the actual facts of the story the enemy is going to get in.

We haven't gotten to the opposition yet here, but the enemy can attack. We're going to see later as they're building the wall they're walking around with one hand on their work tool and the other hand on the sword. You'll see that in a little while in this series. Can't have a gap in the wall.

Another question I have on this guide is "What is obvious?" You've heard me say this before that a poor message will take the obvious and make it obscure, a good message will take the obscure and make it obvious but a great message will take the obvious and make it obvious. What is obviously going on in this text? I think it's this: all men want to be part of something that's bigger than themselves. All of us want to be part of something that's bigger than ourselves. All of the people responded to this because it was an unbelievably big dream that was made believably small and they could see themselves engaged in it. We're all looking for some way that we can make a difference in this world, how we can be involved in rebuilding the country or the company or the marriage or the family or whatever it is.

The family relationships, could we rebuild them? We all want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We see from this that no contribution to that dream is too small, no matter how big or small the contribution is. Every contribution is important. The big idea today, dream unbelievably big but start believably small.

Then finally, let's talk about this, how we can always make the next step believably small. How can we actually make that next step believably small? Let's look at what Nehemiah did, what Jesus did and what we can do. Okay, so what did Nehemiah do? What if after giving this incredible speech... Now we don't have the whole speech but we have enough to know that it was very inspiring, "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace." They've been in disgrace for 100 years. They were hungry, they were thirsty, they were starving for someone to give them this unbelievably big dream. Nehemiah gives it to them and he does it beautifully.

Now, if at the end of this speech, "I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me", what if at the end of the speech he said, "Okay, now let's get together in two weeks and I want to talk to you about this some more"? You see? When you create a little momentum you have to go ahead right away and capture on the spot. We learned this at Man in the Mirror. We learned this doing seminars - I learned this 25 years ago. I would go into a church, this is back when I was the only speaker, but now I don't even do that anymore, others do it. I'd go into church and after a few of these adventures I realized that when I had received the phone call and they had scheduled me to come in and do a seminar, say Friday night, Saturday seminar, they hung up the phone and they didn't know any better but they thought they were done.

I would arrive at the venue and I would realize that the leaders had done nothing to think about what kind of men they wanted to have at the event, why they were having the event, what they wanted to accomplish at the event, what they hoped would happen after the event, how they would capture the momentum. You see? It was like Nehemiah giving the speech and then going off and playing golf. As I say, overcoming inertia, it takes a lot of energy. The Space Shuttle, 50 miles from this podium to the due east, when they would shoot off the space shuttle they would strap the space shuttle to two liquid rocket boosters that contain 500,000 gallons of liquid fuel, which would all burn off and boom, eight and a half seconds. Then they would separate. It looked like three ships going up instead of one. It took those two liquid fuel boosters to overcome the inertia.

What a pity, what a shame to go to all that trouble to assemble all these, Nehemiah, all these resources, or Jesus to come to earth and go through all that persecution, what a tragic loss to go to all of that effort to create all of that momentum and then not capture it. It'd be like in the middle of the coldest winter you've ever been in warming your house to a toasty 72 degrees and then leaving all the windows open. Not capturing the momentum, you see.

Now we're going to see later that this rebuilding of the wall, it's only the first of so far I've counted five phases of Nehemiah's plan to rebuild his country. We're just at phase one, rebuilding the wall. It's the first step. It's the believably small thing that he could do to help accomplish the unbelievably big dream. In your situation, either the dream that you have or the dream you've attached to that's unbelievably big, what is the believably small next step that you can take to create some early momentum and capture that momentum?

What can we do? Well always make the next step believably small. If it's trying to reconcile a family that's in disarray, there's a lot of that going on these days, lots of reasons for it of course but at the root it's the... It doesn't make any difference how we got into the current situation, the only solution is to disciple our way out. How many times have you heard me say that? It doesn't make any difference how we got in the current situation. The only solution that God has given us is to disciple our way out. What's the discipleship thing to do? In the marriage, what's the discipleship thing to do? In the family, what's the discipleship thing to do? It's reconciliation.

It's reconciliation. It's not tough love, "I'm cutting you off, I have to let you hit bottom." I mean there's some of this going on and that's important, but this is your son. This is your son. The goal is not tough love. The goal is reconciliation, tough love notwithstanding. We get to reconciliation with our dad by understanding that the narrative that we've created in isolation is necessarily wrong and we try to hear his side of the story and we come to him in a Spirit of humility and we say, "Dad, I just want you to know that I love you very much and I'm really sorry for all the ways that I've made this relationship so difficult."

That's believably small. It's an unbelievably big vision to reconcile this family. It happened to my family, I'm not having time to tell that story today, but I will tell it. At the age of 35, having been alienated from my family for all intents and purposes, from the time of 18 when I quit high school the power of love to do that is so incredibly... Love makes whatever next step you have believable. Forgiveness makes whatever next step you have believable. Whether it's the marriage, whether it's the family, whether it's the whole nation, it's the community, it's your church that you're trying to rebuild, always make the next step believably small, something that people could actually visualize themselves doing and being successful at it.

The big idea today: dream unbelievably big but start believably small.

Let's pray.

Our heavenly Father, our dearest Father, Lord we come to you. We thank you for Nehemiah. We thank you for all these little people, these unknown people. Who knows, maybe they weren't so little in their day, but many of them obviously just had a house and they were concerned about what was going on across the street. God, we are too. We're concerned in what's going on across the street and we want to rebuild that. Then some of us, Lord, we want to rebuild a neighborhood, a whole section. Some of us are thinking about the whole community.

Lord, whatever it is, Lord I just pray that as we go through this series on a step by step guide for rebuilding the country that you would give each of us inspired ideas about how we can take this intense desire that we have to be part of something bigger than ourselves over against this deep fear that what could I possibly do to make a difference and you would just sort of help us work through all of that and get mobilized again, get back in the game again or deeper in the game wherever it is that you have each of us right now. We ask this in your powerful and your wonderful and your loving name, Jesus. Amen.