

# “Get Busy Building”

## Leadership Lessons from Nehemiah

November 2025

### Introduction

In the seasons of God for our lives, *there is a time to build and a time to break down* (Ecclesiastes 3:3).

There was an appointed time for Joshua to break down Jericho’s walls and another time for Nehemiah to build up Jerusalem’s.

*Are you in a Nehemiah time?* Has God called you build something new or rebuild something of old? Perhaps it is a new family, a new business, a new career, or a new ministry? Or maybe it is dusting off and rebuilding an old dream?

Discover how Nehemiah’s story 2,500 years ago can be practically applied to yours today.

Nehemiah was both a substance and a shadow – a shadow for how Christ is building his Church today *and* a shadow for how His children are to build with God. I have personally applied building lessons from Nehemiah to build various ministries, companies, products, business systems, services, and even my family heritage.

Building insights from Nehemiah are quite vast, such as: A vision driven by compassion, plurality of leadership (teamwork), dealing with opposition, resource allocation, effective communication, prayer, specialization of tasks, and diligence, to name a few. Let’s explore the first three today.

### #1: A vision driven by compassion

Nehemiah Chapter One records the true catalyst that jump-started his building project – compassion.

After receiving word from messengers regarding the demolished condition of Jerusalem, Nehemiah’s heart became overwhelmed with compassion for the people:

And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and disgrace, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates

have been burned with fire.” Now when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. – Neh 1:3-4 NASB20

Building with God starts with compassion, not a vision.

Any true call to build something never begins with a discovery of talent, but of a discovery of *who* is to be helped. In fact, not knowing one’s *who* is a threat to one’s talents.

The compassion Nehemiah experienced revealed *who* his audience was *and* what specific burden they had. God enlarged Nehemiah’s purpose through emotions not words. He revealed it through tears not teachings.

After Nehemiah discovered his *who*, his *how* and *what* came later.

Herein lies a great lesson: In business or ministry, most describe *what* they do (their products or services) rather than *who* they help (their audience). For example: “*We sell life insurance!*”, rather than “*We help people, and their loved ones live securely amongst the uncertainties of life*”. Nehemiah teaches us that God’s building projects always prioritize people over profit.

A close friend who is now with the Lord also taught me this lesson.

At the age of 35, the young and successful industrial engineer Robert Shaw paused to ponder his career. Suddenly he saw two troubled children leaving a recreational center and crossing over a small bridge. Compassion entered his heart. Then, this simple thought, “*I could spend the rest of my life helping children like these*”. And indeed, he did. He went on to build two large mental health clinics staffed with hundreds of employees, became a consultant and change catalyst to some of most troubled cities in America and Canada, and published social service manuals and leadership books for future generations to come. He built and helped troubled children and their families up to his death at 92. What came first – vision or compassion? Compassion.

*Key question: When seeking to build your new endeavor, are you clear on who you are called to help? Has God given you compassion for them?*

## **#2: Effective partnering and teamwork**

A light cast onto a tall building often produces a shadow that is larger than the building itself. Anytime God calls or casts His light onto someone to build or rebuild something, the shadow that gets produced (the future state) will always be much larger than the leader. Big builds require big teams.

After getting clear on who to help, Nehemiah then focused on communicating his compassion and vision to others and recruiting them as building partners. We read:

Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and installed its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred [and] the Tower of Hananel. And next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and installed its doors with its bolts and bars... – Neh 3:1-3 NASB20

It is fascinating that Nehemiah devoted this entire chapter to tell us about his co-workers and building functions. In a similar fashion, Paul also recorded a comprehensive listing of his co-workers in Romans 16. Both Nehemiah and Paul secured trustworthy partners who contributed to different aspects of their Kingdom building projects based on their own unique gifts and graces.

Like Nehemiah, when God calls you to build something, it will always demand strong partnerships and a team. Jesus Himself started with a team of twelve and now has billions of partnerships world-wide.

*How does one build a team?* Practically speaking, it begins with defining who needs to be on the bus to make your build a reality. Nehemiah needed folks like goldsmiths, merchants, ironworkers, & inspectors. You may need lawyers, engineers, architects, experts, assistants, co-authors, ministry mentors, therapists, coaches, IT professionals, graphic designers, pastors, salesmen, or more. I have needed all these plus when building various things with God.

*How does one afford all these resources?* Don't worry, God *will always* resource what He desires to restore.

Solomon emphasized the importance of building teams in much of his writings. *“With many advisors there is success” (Proverbs 24:6)*. This means that good visionaries are not afraid to recruit people who know more than them on various matters.

“The real question when partnering is: *Who can do what I cannot so I can do what I am called to?*”

### **#3: Dealing with opposition**

There are 7 types of oppositions that Nehemiah and his men faced while rebuilding the Jerusalem walls: Ridicule, threat of attack, discouragement, extortion, compromise, slander, and treachery. Each required their own strategy to resolve. Anytime you are called to build something, you will face opposition from people – some of whom may be very close to you. *Expect* for others to misunderstand your purpose and mission.

Let's zero in on one type of opposition today: **slander**.

Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry, and he mocked the Jews. – Neh 4:1 NASB20

There were two primary opposers who slandered Nehemiah: Sanballet and Tobiah.

- Sanballat scorned the workmen: *“These feeble Jews”* What will they do for materials? *Will they revive the stones out of the rubbish?* (Neh 4:2 NASB).
- Tobiah scorned the work: *“There going to make some sorry work, and they themselves will be ashamed of it”: If a fox go up (with his weight) he will break down their stone wall.”* (Neh 4:3 NASB).

Because of their ignorance, both attempted to discourage Nehemiah and his team from building what God put in their hearts. However, the team refused to listen and maintained a strong focus on the work: *“they made such good speed that in a little time they had run up the wall to half its height, for the people had a mind to work; their hearts were upon it”*.

People need both a *mind* (the right skills) and a *heart* (the right reason) to work. One without the other will lead to less-than-optimal results.

**Key lesson:** The reproaches of your slanderers should accelerate your build rather than drive you from it.

The chief Kingdom builder, Christ Jesus, also experienced slander and opposition. A few weeks after starting His earthly ministry, his own brothers began slandering him.

One day they see hundreds of people gathered around Jesus and his disciples. They ran over, grabbed him by the arm, and attempted to bring him back home. As they do they begin telling the crowd, *“Everybody, listen! Our brother (Jesus) has gone crazy! You should not listen to what He is telling you”* (Mark 3:14).

Wow. Jesus’ own family discouraging others to not listen to the very words spoken out of God in the flesh!

You may hear likewise, *“don’t pay attention to them. They have lost their mind trying to build this and that”*.

But they don’t see God’s vision for your life. They don’t sense your compassion. They may never.

How did Jesus’ respond to His slanderers? He ignored their words, but with great love, turned around and died on a cross for them a few years later. Like Jesus, love your slanderers anyways. Create boundaries, but lay down your life for them, too.

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## **Summary**

Are you in a building season? Start with compassion. Clarify who you are called to help. Then, through prayer, cast vision and solicit and cooperate with partners to help. Listen to wise counsel. Use opposition and competition to drive success.

Now, get busy building!