

Sharing the Vision

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Date: 02 October 2023

[0 : 00] We'll begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We'll sing in Psalm 96a, in the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 96a, singing from verse 1 to verse 9, page 1 to 6 of the psalm book, the tune is Argyle, Psalm 96a.

Oh, sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day let all the earth proclaim. We'll sing from verse 1 to 9 to God's praise.

O sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day.

Let all the earth proclaim. His glory and his mighty deeds to every love dear.

How great that God saves the Lord, with him no gods compare.

[1 : 41] For other gods are good and stones.

The Lord, we'll sing the Lord, in the name of God. The Lord, we'll sing by day. The Lord, we'll sing by day. The Lord, we'll sing by day. Of power and majesty and his, he dwells in glorious light.

All nations do, the Lord has died, the glory that is due.

Glory to God's name, the sky to God, and praise His name anew.

Enter in the gates with joy and pain, an opening with you.

[3 : 13] Worship the Lord in holy fear, on earth, the core and the love.

Let's unite our hearts together in prayer. Let us pray. Lord our God, our Father in heaven, to worship you anew this evening hour, we thank you for the praise which we come with.

We thank you that we can come singing a song to the Lord, singing anew full of praise to you. For we thank you that that is a song that you have given to your people.

A song that at one point we had no desire to sing and no longing for at all. But we thank you that so many of the Psalms describe to us that transforming power that you have.

You're the one who is able to lift us up, to bring us out of the clay and set our feet on the rock as another describes, putting a new song in our mouth.

[4 : 32] We thank you, Lord, that we have a song of praise to sing. And we come this evening, Lord, to worship you as the living God. And we thank you that we come acknowledging your power and sovereignty, acknowledging your rule over us as a people and your world as a whole.

For we are reminded in this Psalm how you are the one who has made the heaven's height and all that's contained in them. And so we come thankful that we have access to you in and through the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thankful that we come not of any good in our sin, or righteousness of ourselves, but we come humbly through the righteousness of Christ.

For we know that we are sinners, and yet we know too that there is power in the blood of Christ to forgive all our sins. That we have one who came to take our sins upon himself.

All that we deserve, he took from us and bore our sins on the cross. And so we come, O Lord, looking to you this evening. Thankful for all that you have done.

[5 : 43] Thankful for all that we can come with this evening. We are told to come with joy and bring an offering with us. And we come to offer whatever else we have, we come to offer praise.

We offer our lives up to you, Lord. We offer all that we are and have up to you as our Lord and as our God. And we pray, Lord, that you will help us to be still in your presence this evening, to worship you aright.

Come, O Lord, able to put all other things to one side. We acknowledge that our minds can be so cluttered and so busy. We can already be planning the week ahead. We can already be thinking about all that maybe lies ahead of us in this coming week.

But we thank you, Lord, that you help us just for this time to be still and to know that you are God.

And so, Lord, take away these distractions that so often keep us from hearing what you are saying to us.

And give us ears to hear through your word and by your spirit. That you are speaking to us, your voice calling to us, to each of us, to come to you.

[6 : 50] Whatever situation we are in, if we are believing in you with all our hearts, we come leaning upon you. We come, O Lord, dependent upon you for all things.

But perhaps others come, O Lord, not knowing that assurance of faith. Not knowing what it is to know the Lord Jesus as a personal Savior.

Maybe knowing much about him and hearing your word many times and yet still not experiencing that life-changing moment. Of those who are still maybe struggling to understand you.

Or seeking you with all their hearts but feeling as close to them. That, Lord, you would open the doors for them. That you would bring them into your heart.

That you would bring in and build on those who are being saved. We thank you for the times of blessing that your church has enjoyed down through all the generations.

[7 : 50] We thank you for the times of blessing that you are in your word.

As a people. Here in our midst as a congregation and as a community here, Lord. We long to see you enlivening us and quickening us in these days, Lord.

When we see so much that we despair at and are despondent about. Lord, help us to lift our eyes to you. And to recognize you as the one who is able to change all that we see around us.

And to change it for good. And the hearts that are hard towards you, Lord, you are able to suffer.

Those who are angry against you. Those who so often curse you.

Who despise your name and who reject you so often. We know, Lord, that they are many. But yet, Lord, you are able to transform. You are able to work in power.

[9 : 09] You are able to bring them to love you with all their hearts. As we heard this morning of Saul. How he met the Lord in the midst of a life of chaos.

On his way to persecute Christians. He met with the Lord and his life was transformed so quickly. And we thank you that there is that testimony and witness through your word.

And that we see it to this, Lord. You are able to do so much more than we ask or imagine. And that keeps us, Lord, coming to you in prayer.

Because we cannot do it ourselves. We depend on you. So we come praying for you to work, oh Lord. Work in our families, in our homes, in our communities and workplaces around us, Lord.

We pray to see your hand upon us for good. The good hand of the Lord we will read of this evening. We pray to see it here in our midst, oh Lord.

[10 : 05] And we thank you that your church has been here. And through the other islands as we pray for the communion season in our midst, Lord. We thank you for these times of refreshing around your word.

And pray it would be so for those who are gathered even this evening in our back. We pray that they would have had a blessed weekend. And we pray for Reverend Rory Stott as he is ministering to them this evening.

We pray, Lord, for the congregation as they gather. Even with some of our own young folk there as well, Lord. We pray it will be a time of blessing and refreshing to all. In the fellowship and in the preaching of your word.

Your spirit will be present and be at work in power. We pray for the upcoming weekend as well in Calanation Cross with communions taking place there. We pray for your servants who will be ministering, Reverend Alistair MacLeod and Dr. Malcolm McLean.

And we pray, Lord, that you will use them as instruments in your hands. As we heard again this morning, we pray, Lord, that they will be used by you as they proclaim the riches of Christ.

[11 : 14] There will be times of blessing and encouragement around your word. We pray that for our nation too. Lord, we thank you that there are many churches around our land here.

We so often focus on the challenges that surround us as a nation and all that is wrong with us. We thank you, Lord, that many of our cities and towns and villages have a rich gospel witness.

And we pray for your people, people who live in our town here over the summer months, who come from different parts of the land and different congregations.

We pray, Lord, that where your word is preached with truth and authority, that your blessing will be upon it. That you will revive our land and bless us as a nation.

Lord, turn us one more than towards you to know days of your power and your refreshing in our midst. We remember, Lord, our world as well and so much of what goes on around us, Lord.

[12:15] Yet again, we thank you that in the wilderness of the earth, you have your people scattered far and wide in many different lands among many different people. We thank you for your church that is being built.

We thank you for your people who are faithful to you in all corners of the world. A praying people, a worshipping people, a people who worship the true and the living God, even in the midst of those who worship idols made of wood or stone or so many other materials.

We thank you that there are those of your people pointing others towards the riches of Christ and the hope of the gospel and the joy of eternal life through him.

And so we pray, Lord, that you will build up your church near and far and that we would see your glory present in all our lands throughout the world. Remember us as a people.

We pray for you to be near with us, our homes and our families and all our loved ones. We commit them to you, O Lord, and ask that in every need we have that we will be able to come, to come with our burdens to you, to cast them upon you, and to be able, Lord, to see your hand giving us all that we need.

[13:30] Not maybe what we ask for, Lord, but we know that you will give as we need. You will give grace that is sufficient for every circumstance. And so we ask, O Lord, surround our people, surround them in different needs at this time.

Those who are unwell, those who are concerned for loved ones, or just struggling in different ways at this time. O Lord, we commit them to you and ask that you will surround them and uphold them and be very near to them in all their different needs.

Lord, we thank you for the blessing of fellowship and the blessing of prayer to be able to share together in all these different ways. And we pray, Lord, that you will hear us together, that you will hear our prayers even as we offer them up now, that you will hear our praise as we offer it up, and that as we come to your word, Lord, you will help us to hear you as you speak to us.

So, Lord, guide our worship, guide us, guide our focus to you, and help us to lift our eyes up to you, and to look and depend on you for all things. So, Lord, go continue with us, we pray, with us in the week ahead as well, Lord, guide all our steps and all that we do and say.

May it be to your glory and for your glory, and for yours alone. We ask it all for our sins, Lord, acknowledging how often we fall short, of how we sin in thought, word, and in deed.

[14:58] And yet, O Lord, we come, asking and pleading for forgiveness, for all our shortcomings. So, hear our prayers and continue with us, we ask. So, we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. Again, sing to God's praise, this time in Psalm 44. And let's sing Psalms. Psalm 44 on page 54 of the Psalm books.

Psalm 44, we'll sing verse 1 to verse 8, the tune is Tiverton. O God, we with our ears have heard our fathers told us so, what you accomplished in their days and days of long ago.

Your hand drove nations out and placed our fathers there, and said, you crushed the peoples, but you caused our tribes to grow and spread.

We'll sing these verses, verse 1 to 8, Psalm 44, to God's praise. O God, we with our ears have heard our fathers told us so, what you accomplished in their days and days of long ago.

[16:30] You crushed the peoples, but you caused our tribes to grow and spread. You crushed the peoples, but you caused our tribes to grow and spread. In the name of the Lord, we with our fathers to grow and spread.

It was not by their sword or arm that they possessed the land, but by your love and faith are shown, and by your mighty hand.

You are my King and God, Lord, I forging all victories.

Through you we travel down our foes and brought our enemies.

My soul does not bring victory. Lord, do I trust my hope.

[18:21] You put our enemies to shame and overcome our foes.

In God alone we make our roles, Rejoice in all day long.

And to your name forevermore we offer praise in song.

We'll turn together now to read in God's word in the Book of Nehemiah, in the Old Testament, Nehemiah chapter 2.

We can read the whole of this chapter together. Nehemiah chapter 2. So Nehemiah chapter 2, taking up a reading at the beginning.

[19 : 40] In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Arctexes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.

Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, Let the king live forever. Why should not my face be sad, When the city, the place of my father's graves, lies in ruins.

And its gates have been destroyed by fire. Then the king said to me, What are you requesting? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

And I said to the king, If it pleases the king, And if your servant has found favour in your sight, That you send me to Judah, To the city of my father's graves, That I may rebuild it.

[20 : 44] And the king said to me, The queen sitting beside him, How long will you be gone? And when will you return? So it pleased the king to send me, When I had given him a time.

And I said to the king, If it pleases the king, Let letters be given to me for the government of the province, Beyond the river, That they may let me pass through until I come to Judah.

And a letter to Asaph, The keeper of the king's forest, That he may give me timber to make beams, For the gates of the fortress of the temple, And for the wall of the city, And for the house that I shall occupy.

And the king granted me what I asked, For the good hand of my God was upon me. Then I came to the leaders of the province, Beyond the river, And gave them the king's letters.

Now the king had sent with me, Officers of the army and horsemen. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, It displeased them that no one had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

[21 : 57] So I went to Jerusalem, And I was there for three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God would do to my heart, To do for Jerusalem.

There was no animal with me, But the one on which I rode. I went out by night, By the valley gate of the dragon spring, To the dung gate, And I inspected the walls of Jerusalem, That were broken down, And its gates that had been destroyed by fire.

Then I went to the fountain gate, And to the king's pool. But there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. Then I went up in the night by the valley, And inspected the wall.

And I turned back and entered by the valley gate, And I turned. And the officials did not know, Where I had gone, Or what I was doing. And I had told the Jews, The priests, The nobles, The officials, And the rest, For where to do the work.

Then I said to them, You see the trouble, How Jerusalem lies in ruins, With its gates burned. Come, Let us build the wall of Jerusalem, The longer suffer the Israel.

[23 : 13] And I told them of the hand of my God, That had been upon me for good. And also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, Let us rise up and build.

So they strengthened their hands for the good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, And Tobiah the Ammonite, Heard, And Geshem the Arab heard of it, They jeered at us, And despised us, And said, What is this thing that you are doing?

Are you rebelling against the king? Then I replied to them, The God of heaven will make us prosper. And we his servants will arise, And build up and build, And we will not have any portion or claim in Jerusalem.

Amen. And may God bless that reading from his word. And before we turn back to look at this passage, And sing again to God's praise in Psalm 79, In the Scottish Psalter, Page 331.

Psalm 79, Page 331. We are going to sing from verse 5 down to verse 9, The tune of St. Minver.

[24 : 34] How long, Lord, shall thine anger last? Will thou still keep the same? And shall thy fervent jealousy burn like unto a flame? We'll sing from verse 5 down to verse 9, Where it speaks of the glory of the Lord being the help towards his people.

So we'll sing verse 5 to 9, To God's praise. So we'll sing verse 5 to 9, To God's praise. Amen.

Come, Hu. And shall thy fervent jealousy burn like unto a hill?

Amen. For that can also tend that to go? Or you'll sing from verse 6. Prince■■■■ette of the bus with ains presented to Class. Time, Ar Rock Centre, To God's praise, Lambë, no matter how long, Hear thy fervent jealousy chillin'.

For that ■■ indic act shall I take zodiac Excellent. See her like a true affair.

On his report, thy duty for the time ever known.

[25 : 49] And all those kingdoms within name have never called upon.

For these are they who Jacob have devout with grueling.
And they, his amity, his hope have caused ways to lie.
Against us might not for mercies thy tender mercy show.
Let there be a seedily for we all can be low.

[27 : 16] For thine is glory. Help us, Lord, to my Savior be.

Deliver us for thine's sake.

O march away our sin. Amen. We can turn back to our reading in Nehemiah chapter 2.

And we can read again at verse 17. Nehemiah chapter 2 at verse 17. Then I said to them, You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates opened.

Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision. And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me.

[28 : 32] And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work. A few weeks ago now we were looking at chapter 1 of Nehemiah.

That Nehemiah and the burden that Nehemiah had when he heard of the ruin that Jerusalem was in and the people and their despondency. And he was burdened for them.

And it was a burden that he was taking to the Lord. Last week we were looking at the New Testament and we were looking at Colossians chapter 4.

We were seeing Paul's team ministry and the people that he had around him and how so many people were used in different ways for the Lord.

Times there as well. And we're thinking of linking the two together. However, we see Nehemiah, the fact that was to be done in Jerusalem, he couldn't do it alone in the same way as Paul couldn't do the ministry of the gospel that he would hope to do without having those who could help him and be with him along the way as well.

[29 : 45] We're thinking there of two men who were strong leaders in the church in their day. But since we looked at these two passages over these last few weeks, have you considered them for yourself?

Have you thought about what does it mean for me as a member, as an adherent here in the congregation in Stornoway? What do these passages say to me in my own role in the church and how I might be serving the Lord or how I may be able to serve the Lord?

Has it made a difference to the burden that you feel for this place or the vision that you have for this place, for this congregation, for this town, for the work of the Lord?

As we return to Nehemiah this evening in chapter 2, we return with that remembrance of his burden for Jerusalem in our minds as well and the burden and vision that he had in Jerusalem.

We saw in the opening chapter, chapter 1, a simple question that Nehemiah asked of his brother who had come to visit.

[30 : 58] A simple question turned his life upside down. In the beginning of chapter 1, Hanani, his brother, had come from Judah.

Nehemiah asked him just a simple question, How are they in Jerusalem? How are they in Jerusalem? And the answer that he heard in verse 3 of chapter 1 was this, They said to him, The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire. It wasn't the answer he would have been hoping for.

And it was an answer that left him troubled, so much trouble that he said in verse 4 that as soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days.

He was distraught at what he had been told, about what he was hearing about his beloved Jerusalem and its people. They were in destruction.

[32 : 09] They were in shame. But he wanted to do something about it. There was a burden on him that would not go. And that is sometimes the way the Lord works in his people.

Often he gives people a burden. A burden for a particular people. For a particular place. For a particular work. A burden that just will not go away.

A burden that won't go away until we do something about it. And Nehemiah couldn't let this go until something was done about it.

And do you know what makes this burden and vision of Nehemiah even more remarkable? This burden that he had for Jerusalem and its people. What makes it even more remarkable is this. He had never been there. He had never been in Jerusalem. He was born to parents who had been taken captive from Jerusalem.

[33 : 11] He was born about 900 miles away. As we read of him here, he's in Persia. In the capital of Persia, which was hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem.

He'd never been there. And yet his heart was towards his homeland and his people. He just wouldn't know. And it made me think of how this year marked 100 years since the Metagama and the Marloch sailed from these shores.

With hundreds of people belonging to our islands here who would never see this place again. And yet who had a great burden and a love for this place.

And over the last year we've seen some of their family come over to see this place with a real heart and a longing and a burden for this place. But it begs the question of us.

Do we have a real burden for this place? Do we have a real love for this place and its people? As we think of the kind of ruin that we're seeing around us again and again.

[34 : 22] The ruin that sin brings into our lives and into our communities. Does it make us weep and mourn? Does it give us a burden for this place to see the gospel going out here and making a difference to our people?

And if we do, how do we grasp this burden prayerfully and practically? How do we seek to fulfill this burden and this vision for our own town and our place to be a place blessed by God?

Well that's what we learn as we look to Nehemiah. And how his burden that he just couldn't let go. It became a reality. It became something that he saw the good hand of the Lord at work in in so many different ways.

And how he encouraged and inspired a people to be involved in the work to the point that they would say in verse 18, Let us rise up and build.

There are lessons we learn from Nehemiah and his leadership. About a godly vision. And about trusting God and going forward in his strength.

[35 : 44] Paul in Colossians, he couldn't do the ministry alone. The spread of the gospel, he couldn't do it by himself. Nehemiah here, he couldn't rebuild the walls by himself.

He couldn't see God's hand for good upon the people by himself. And neither can we. We need a shared vision.

A vision that we all have and a burden that we all have together for the good of this place. One church leader put it like this. A godly vision is right for the times.

Right for the church and right for the people. A godly vision promotes faith rather than fear. A godly vision motivates people to action.

A godly vision requires risk taking. A godly vision glorifies God and not people. That's what Nehemiah's vision and his burden was like.

[36 : 50] Let's pray that that would be our vision and our burden here in this town and for the place where the Lord has put us today.

To keep us going in the work of the Lord. Encouraged. Encouraged. Good hand of the Lord upon us in all that we go to do for the Lord.

We're not going to look at every detail of the book of Nehemiah. But we're going to take steps from key points here and look how we can learn from Nehemiah and the work that the people were involved in.

We read the whole of chapter 2. But we're going to look at just the latter half of it. Verse 9 down to the end of the chapter. But we see the context in the whole of this chapter just for what was happening.

But you notice that there's a big change between verse 8 and verse 9. Both in terms of time and in the place where they're based.

[37 : 56] In verse 8, Nehemiah is still with the king in Persia. He is still 900 miles away from Jerusalem.

But in verse 9, we've jumped forward probably around four months in time. Nehemiah and those who were with him have traveled that journey of around 900 miles from Susa down to Jerusalem. And this is where we pick it up. So the time has moved on about four months. The place has moved on. Coming to Jerusalem. Nehemiah seeing the place for the first time.

And tonight we're going to look at three lessons from Nehemiah's leadership here. As he comes to share his vision and his burden with the people of Jerusalem.

And there's three things, three lessons to take with us. First is this, a time to rest. Secondly, we see a time to review.

[39 : 00] And then thirdly, a time to rise. So first, a time to rest. You might expect Nehemiah to arrive at Jerusalem and immediately to get going with the work.

After all, when you read through the destruction that you see in the walls, how they're demolished, the gates are burned. There's so much to be done.

You think he's just going to get going with it. That may be our attitude. When we see there's something that needs to be done. We just need to get on. There's so much to do.

Let's just get on with it. Well, four months of traveling over 900 miles through harsh countryside would take its toll on anyone.

And so verse 11 gives us our first key lesson from Nehemiah. And that is, fresh for the task.

[40 : 01] In verse 11 it says, Nehemiah, like us all, had his limits.

He had needs, both physical and spiritual needs, to be watched and guarded against first and foremost. Three days after arriving in Jerusalem, he rested.

He didn't get on with the work. Immediately, he took these days to rest, both physically and spiritually. And it's interesting how you look at this chapter in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. And if you go to the previous book, Ezra.

And Ezra was similar to Nehemiah. He was used by God, but for rebuilding the temple.

In Ezra chapter 8, verse 32, it says this. It says this. We came to Jerusalem, and there we remained three days. They arrived in Jerusalem, and for three days they rested in the days of Ezra.

[41 : 14] The same is true of Nehemiah. We went to Jerusalem, and we were there three days. So there's got to be a lesson there for us to learn.

Nehemiah was seeing how much there was to be done, and yet his immediate priority was to rest. And how important is rest? And how important is rest when we think of being involved in the world of the Lord today?

Today, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, it's a reminder to us of the importance of rest. It's a creation ordinance, as we call it.

Something that God put in place from the very beginning. The Lord's Day, the seventh day, was to be a day of rest. And we know ourselves that when we become tired, we're not as effective.

And if we are tired over a long period of time, our work will suffer. Our production is not going to be what it should be. Our service for the Lord isn't going to be what it should be.

[42 : 23] And if the Lord is commanding rest for his people, we have to make sure that we are allowing for it. Both personally, but also as a congregation.

That we don't burn people out. Ezra knew it. Nehemiah knew it. The Lord Jesus himself knew the importance of rest.

Of keeping fresh in the work. In the New Testament, you read of the Lord Jesus at the death of John the Baptist. In Matthew 14, verse 13, after he'd heard the news, When Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.

Something you see often in the life of Jesus. He finds a place to be by himself. But he also knew the importance of it for his disciples too.

In Mark 6, verse 31, Jesus having sent his disciples out two by two to go on the work of the spread of the gospel, They had come back.

[43 : 32] And he said to them as they returned, He said to them, Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while. For many were coming and going, And they had no leisure even to eat.

The importance of rest is there for us to see. And that's what the first lesson that we learn from Nehemiah. He came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

We have to guard ourselves carefully. To guard our people carefully from overexertion, From being overtired, overworked.

When we are tired, like I said, We won't achieve as much. The enthusiasm will wane. It will not be what it should be. Rest is crucial.

It's a story of two woodcutters. One was experienced. One was just starting out, But young and enthusiastic.

[44 : 36] And he challenged the older man. He challenged him to an all-day woodcutting competition. And the challenger, the young man, Worked hard all day.

Hardly stopped all day. Just a brief lunch break. And yet every time he was looking across to the older woodcutter, He seemed to be sitting down and resting. He couldn't understand it. And he thought, I'll be way ahead in this contest. But at the end of the day, The challenger was surprised to find That the older man had chopped so much more wood than he had. And he couldn't understand it. I don't get it. He said, Every time I looked, You seem to be taking a rest. And yet I was working hard all day. The older woodsman said, But you didn't notice That I was sharpening my axe Every time I sat down to take a rest. And so often, We can be like that ourselves too. We can just keep going, Thinking we're affecting, We're doing so much. When in reality, We could be achieving so much more Just with a bit of rest. [45 : 47] We need physical rest, But we also need spiritual rest as well. Because Nehemiah in these three days Had time to spend with God as well.

Because you find that God had put this burden In his heart. And God was still putting this burden In his heart as well. In verse 12 it says, And I told no one What my God had put in my heart To do for Jerusalem.

It's a continuous tense. It's an ongoing burden That the Lord is placing in his heart. And he was taking his time now To be close with God.

And again, There's a lesson there for ourselves as well. To allow ourselves time To listen to God Before rushing in To the work That we seek to do for the Lord.

To be still And listen To the Lord. We look around And there's no shortage Of things to do. There's no shortage of things That we could And perhaps should do.

[46 : 57] But Nehemiah gives us this lesson. Take time To be fresh For the work. Take time To listen To the Lord. So that's the first lesson That we learn From Nehemiah.

The second lesson Is this Time To review. You would think After three days Refreshing himself Right, it's time Now to get on With the work.

But like any good leader He needs to know What's ahead of him. And so he takes time To review. To see himself What is happening Or what has happened In Jerusalem.

From verse 13 Down there To verse 16. You see He takes his time Going around the city. Inspecting Everything that is Going on Around him.

An American businessman Called Max Dupree. He speaks He spoke of the Responsibility Involved In leadership. He was a successful Businessman And he also wrote Many books On leadership.

[48 : 10] And he said this The first responsibility Of a leader Is to define Reality. Leaders need To have a good picture Of what is really Going on Around them.

And they need To help others Take an honest Look At this reality. Now you might Say to yourself Why are we going To listen To a businessman?

What does he Have to say To us Here in Stornoway Tonight? Well the key Lesson from Max Dupree Was yes He was a very Successful Businessman But first And foremost He was a Christian.

He was a Christian Who put the Lord Front and Foremost In everything That he did. He is saying When we're Looking at Doing anything And work And serving As leaders In the church That we put The Lord First Of course We listen We learn From all Kinds of People From all Kinds of Christians From all Kinds of Walks Of life And the need For reality Is there Before us Not to be Blinkered To what is Going on Around us Not to Think That we Have all The answers And know Exactly What's Going on And what Needs To be Done We need To take Time To review We need To take Time To listen And to See for Ourselves What is Happening Around us What are People Thinking How are They engaging With the World Or not Engaging With the Gospel We know They need The Gospel But do We really Know how To speak To them About it Do we Know the Needs Of those Who are Around us We can Learn From others And we Shouldn't Be scared To do So There's a Great example For us In scripture One of the Greatest Leaders of God's People Moses Who had Led the Children of Israel From Egypt Into the Wilderness He was Struggling To keep On top Of things At one Point He was Trying to Do it All by Himself He needed To hear Someone else Coming With some Advice To him And it Was his Father-in-law Jethro Who came To him And saw What was Going on And said To him What you Are doing Is not Good You and The people With you Will certainly Wear yourselves Out For this Thing is Too heavy For you You are

Not able To do It Alone He didn't

[50 : 49] Take time To review Someone had To come To him And tell Him What you Are doing Is not Good But for Ourselves What we Learn here From Nehemiah Nehemiah Who has Known In Verse 8 The good Hand of My God Was upon Me We learn That we Need To To Define The reality Of what Is going On Around Us The last Nehemiah One I quoted A man Called George Barna Again A Christian Writer Who spoke About vision For the Church And one Aspect He spoke Of was This Vision Is a Result Of how We spent Much Time Absorbing The facts About the Community Taking Time To Think Things And this Is what Nehemiah Is doing Taking Time To himself

To look At the Situation And notice How he Does it Discreetly In verse 12 He says I arose In the Night And I Had a Few Men With me Just a Small Group They went Out To review The Devastation Of Jerusalem One of The reasons Was Because There was Opposition Sanballat And Tobiah We've heard Mention of In verse 10 Will come Back Again God Willing But there Was those Who were Opposed To the Work So he Was doing It Discreetly Doing it Quietly But taking Some trusted Men with Him To see What was Going on Around Is a Bit like He was Starting To grow His team But a Review Did To be Carried Out To see The size Of the Task Everywhere They looked The walls

Were in Devastation There was Parts They couldn't Hardly Get through Because of The devastation That there Was But the Review Enabled Them To plan And remember Nehemiah's Sorrow In chapter One Heard Of the Devastation Here he Is now Seeing it For himself For the First time And it Could have Made him Go one Of two Ways Just his Sorrow To consume Him At the State of Affairs Before him And perhaps Looking in The past If only we Had what We once Had And losing Focus Or it Could have Put him The other Way Determination And trust And faith And hope For the Future And that's Where he Goes It gives Him a Determination To know The good Hand of The Lord Upon them And to Go and Do the Work that Was involved And for Ourselves we Need to Think of This too A review Of what We do And why We do It When we See the Devastation Of sin Around us It may Make us Think of Just a Past If only Things were The way They once Were And we Can get Consumed By that Or it Can put us Another way Determined To go Forward In faith Trusting That rebuilding Is possible Trusting That the Lord Is with us We can Know The good Hand of The Lord Upon us The question Is do we Have that Vision here Do we Have it In ourselves Do we Have it Collectively Together To review What we Are doing And to Ask ourselves Challenging Questions At times But to Trust the Lord Going Forward The gospel Doesn't Change But times Change People Change And we Need to Ask ourselves Are we Engaging in The work Of the Gospel In the Best way Possible And doing It all For the Glory Of God So the Second Lesson is A time To review First Rest To be Fresh For the Task Second A time To review But thirdly And perhaps More importantly A time To inspire For the Task A time To rise When we Look at Nehemiah As a leader Here This is where You see him Coming to the Fore He spent His time Resting He spent His time

[55 : 51] Reviewing But then you See him in Verse 7 17 and 18 Where we See three Things that As a leader He does So well First of all You see what He says there In verse 17 Then I Said to Them This is him Now beginning To show his Vision to The rest Of the People He says You see The trouble We are in There is A responsibility To define Reality A good Leader Must have And here Nehemiah Doesn't hide The troubles He doesn't Hide the Issues that Are before Them And he Claims These issues Himself He doesn't Blame them For not Having done Anything up To this Point He doesn't Look to The past And blame Those who Have maybe Doing any Failures in The past He says This is Our Trouble We are In this

Together You see The trouble We are In And that Is how We are To be As well He feels A part Of it And he Makes the People feel A part Of it All Together Instead of Looking to Blame He's looking For a Solution And surely That is What inspires A prayerful People Not to Look to Blame Anyone For the Situation We find Ourselves In today In a Spiritual Way But to Look for The solution To look To God And to Trust In him We are In this Trouble Together You see The trouble We are In How Jerusalem Lies In ruins And the Gates Are burned There is The reality Of the Situation And we Need The reality But we Need to

Realize We are In this Together Be a Collective Vision A Collective Burden And that's The second Thing that we See of Nehemiah's Leadership Here He inspires We are In this Trouble He says But then In the Middle Of verse 17 He says Come Let us Build the Wall of Jerusalem That we May no

