

Noble Planning

Once you have discerned God's purpose for your life and your business / professional pursuits, which we have been referring to as your "noble purpose," the next step is to make plans to achieve it.

We will examine the example of Nehemiah in the Old Testament to glean biblical principles that we can apply to our own planning.

Nehemiah 1:1-4,11

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. Now it happened in the month Chisleu, [in] the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped [and] had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire." 4 Now it came about 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. 11 "O Lord, I beseech Thee, may Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant and the prayer of Thy servants who delight to revere Thy

OBSERVE

Nehemiah planned to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, which certainly qualified as a BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) given his limited resources, the magnitude of the task, and the opposition in the land.

Leader: Read the CONTEXT box.

CONTEXT

Jerusalem's walls had been destroyed during the Babylonian invasion. The condition of the walls of the city was a matter of security, and also of shame. Nehemiah served as the cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the King of Persia - a position of great trust and potential influence. It was Artaxerxes, having been stirred up by Israel's enemies in the land, who issued the decree years before that Jerusalem may not be rebuilt until he specifically authorizes it. (Ezra 4:4-24)

Leader: Read the verses from chapter 1 of Nehemiah and say aloud and mark "pray" and "prayer," and also note all expressions of time.

DISCUSS

What is Nehemiah's first response to the crisis in Jerusalem?

name, and make Thy servant successful today, and grant him compassion before this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Proverbs 21:1

1 The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Nehemiah 2:1-8

2:1 Now it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

2 So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid.

3 And 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 tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"

4 Then the king said to me, "What would you request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to

What did Nehemiah specifically pray for in verse 11? Why?

Leader: Read Proverbs 21:1.

Relate the truth of this proverb to Nehemiah's prayer.

What is the first planning principle from Nehemiah's example?

Leader: Read the INSIGHT box.

INSIGHT

The king's servants were expected to keep their personal problems and feelings to themselves, and to always display a cheerful disposition in his presence. Moreover, this is the king who ordered the rebuilding work to cease in the first place! Nehemiah literally risked his life to speak to the king about his concerns for Jerusalem. Note in the next passage how God's divine sovereignty and intervention worked in perfect harmony with man's human responsibility and planning.

The month Nisan is four months after the month Chislev (Nehemiah 1:1), which is when Nehemiah received the report on Jerusalem.

Leader: Read Nehemiah 2:1-8. Ask group to continue to note expressions of time.

Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

6 Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time.

7 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah.

8 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 which is by the temple, for the wall of the city, and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me.

Proverbs 22:29

29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

Nehemiah 2:11-18

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days.

12 And I arose in the night, I and a

OBSERVE

Take and take careful note of all the things that Nehemiah requested from the king, and the king's response, recording this information below.

DISCUSS

What evidence is there that Nehemiah prepared carefully for this audience with the king?

What is the next planning principle from Nehemiah's example?

OBSERVE

Lets go back and look at the expressions of time that you marked.

How much time elapsed from the initial report until Nehemiah's discussion with the king?

How much time elapsed from Nehemiah's prayer and his opportunity to make his requests to the king?

few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting into my mind to do for Jerusalem and there was no animal with me except the animal on which I was riding.

13 So I went out at night by the Valley Gate in the direction of the Dragon's Well and on to the Refuse Gate, inspecting the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were consumed by fire.

14 Then I passed on to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was no place for my mount to pass.

15 So I went up at night by the ravine and inspected the wall. Then I entered the Valley Gate again and returned.

16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I as yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who did the work.

17 Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach."

18 And I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me,

DISCUSS

What planning principle do these timing observations suggest?

Leader: Read Proverbs 22:29.

Relate the truth of this proverb to the passage we just studied in Nehemiah 2.

INSIGHT

Christian artist Greg Beecham's motto is "Do all things as unto the Lord, and get so good you can't be ignored."

Leader: Read Nehemiah 2:11-18.

OBSERVE

List the steps that Nehemiah took upon his arrival in Jerusalem.

Leader: Read Judges 5:2 and have the group say aloud and mark "leaders." Then read the CONTEXT box.

CONTEXT

Deborah, the judge of Israel, and Barak the commander of the army, sing this song after their tremendous military victory over Jabin king of Canaan. When leaders lead, the people will follow!

and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.

Judges 5:1-2

1 Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying,
2 That the leaders led in Israel, that the people volunteered, bless the Lord!

Nehemiah 3:1-5,10

1 Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.
2 And next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.
3 Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and its bars.
4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana also made repairs.
5 Moreover, next to him the Tekoites

Relate the truth of Judges 5:2 to the response of the people to Nehemiah. What is the planning principle?

What other planning principles do you see from Nehemiah's first actions in Jerusalem?

Leader: Read Nehemiah 3:1-5, 10 and then read the INSIGHT box.

INSIGHT

Chapter 3 goes on for 32 verses like this, a detailed breakdown of who was responsible for each gate and section of the wall.

OBSERVE

What are your general observations in this passage? Interrogate the text with the 5 W's and an H (who, what, where, when, why and how).

made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.

10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house.

DISCUSS

What planning principles have you discovered?

Leader: Read the INSIGHT box.

INSIGHT

Despite strong opposition, Nehemiah 6:15 tells us "So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days." Nehemiah accomplished his BHAG of rebuilding the wall, and he continued his noble purpose by setting all things in order regarding worship in the temple, obedience to the Law, the abuses of the nobility, and the corrupt priesthood.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES DISCOVERED

This is a list of the truths that we discovered inductively from God's Word:

- A godly **BHAG is a God-centered goal that you know is impossible to accomplish** in your own strength, thus the planning process begins with prayer.
- Noble planning begins with **prayer and preparation**. Prayer without preparation results in missed opportunities presented by God, while preparation without prayer results in wrong opportunities pursued by man. Preparation includes research into the resources required, projected timelines, potential obstacles, etc.
- Leaders patiently make their own **assessment** of the situation, clearly **communicate** to their people the plan's objective and explain why it is important, and then **lead, not drive**, the team to the work.
- An effective plan **breaks the BHAG down** into manageable, and measurable, steps or projects.
- **Effective delegation** includes specific tasks given to specific individuals motivated to participate in the project.

BUSINESS APPLICATION

1. Read the CBMC Forum ministry planning example on the next page. Prayerfully set God-sized (BHAGs) passionate goals for your business based on your life's noble purpose and the noble purpose of your business.
2. First of all, do you have God-sized, God-centered BHAGs for your business?
3. Break your BHAGs down into manageable and measurable project plans that will accomplish your goals.
4. As the leader in your business, follow Nehemiah's example in prayer, preparation, assessment, communication, and delegation.

Example of CBMC Forum Ministry Planning

1. Personal noble purpose statement for Rick Freed, Leader of CBMC Forums Ministry in the Fredericksburg Region.

I have set my heart to study, practice and teach God's Word, and equip others to do the same. (Ezra 7:10, Ephesians 4:11-12)

2. God's noble purpose for our CBMC Forums Ministry.

To carry out the Great Commission (CBMC two-fold purpose) in the Fredericksburg Region and beyond by equipping, encouraging and exhorting Christian business and professional men to be faithful stewards of their business spheres of influence. (Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 10:13-16)

3. We have set these passionate, Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs) for the ministry.

- a. Make the Fredericksburg Region the epicenter for CBMC Forums in the entire Mid-Atlantic Region.
- b. Self-finance this ministry through the men being ministered to in the local Fredericksburg Region, fully and amply supporting the men called to serve this ministry full-time. At the current support rate, this will require 12 Forum groups.
- c. Identify, equip, send and financially support other men called to this marketplace ministry, as well as financially supporting the national team.

4. These goals are broken down into these manageable projects.

- a. Write the **Business Inductive Study Series** (BISS) for Forum Bible study and business application. This fulfills Rick's personal noble purpose and equips men for spiritual growth, stewardship and ministry in their workplace.
- b. **Lead and teach the first three Forum groups** to develop best practices and mentor emerging leaders. Eventually transition leadership roles as the Lord raises up called and qualified men.
- c. Regularly schedule **informational meetings** to form and launch new Forum groups locally. Develop **second generation approach** that launches new groups without Rick personally leading each one.
- d. **Participate in regional and national CBMC events** to build relationships and foster the mid-Atlantic Forum community concept by serving rather than promotion.

- e. Assist Greg Elliot **launch a CBMC ministry in Roanoke and Lynchburg** as a pilot for Mid-Atlantic CBMC Forums point man role and the Forums Regional Community affiliation concept.
- f. Develop **local infrastructure** by forming a Forums ministry leadership team.
- g. Implement **new financial procedures** to support the growth and financial objectives.