

A NEHEMIAH TYPE VISION

Nehemiah 1:1-11

Today you are going to meet the **Lincoln** of the Old Testament. A respected leader with a tender heart. You will see his **tears** as he weeps for his **nation** and its **people** who are **oppressed** and vulnerable. You are about to meet the **Patton** of the Old Testament. A rugged leader, **intolerant** of compromise. Relentlessly demanding **loyalty**. **Punishing** the soft and cowardly. You are about to meet the **Churchill** of the Old Testament. A true statesman. Tested, but **resisting** the enemies that seek to lure him away from his **task** and rising **above** the squabbling factions who would distract him from his **mission**. You are about to meet the Henry **Ford** of the Old Testament. Renowned for his revolutionary **vision** which was the manufacture of **inexpensive** automobiles made by skilled workers, earning **good** wages. Ford's **vision** was for **every** family in America to own an automobile, not **just** the rich. From 1908 to 1927, Ford built the Model T, the first affordable car for average Americans. In 1913 he launched the first **moving** mass assembly line, and by 1918 **half** of all US cars were "Tin Lizzy's." These **quotes** are from Ford's biography; "**Coming** together is a beginning; **keeping** together is progress; **working** together is success." "If **everyone** is moving forward **together**, then **success** takes care of itself." "You can do **anything** if you have **enthusiasm**. **Enthusiasm** is the **yeast** that makes your **hopes** rise to the stars. **Enthusiasm** is the **spark** in your eye, the **swing** in your gait, the **grip** of your hand, the irresistible **surge** of your **will** and your **energy** to execute your ideas. **Enthusiasts** are **fighters**, they have **fortitude**, they have **strong** qualities. **Enthusiasm** is at the bottom of **all** progress. **With** it there is **accomplishment**. **Without** it there are only **alibis**." And finally "**Vision** without **execution** is just **hallucination**."

The **tenderness** of Lincoln. The **fire** of Patton. The **savvy** of Churchill. The **vision** of Ford. All wrapped up in one man. His name – **Nehemiah!**

You and I live thousands of years **after** Nehemiah, but we **live** in a time when we desperately **need** **churches** and **Christians** who are **enthusiastically** filled with **tenderness**, **fire**, **savvy**, and **vision**. We live in a day when the **walls** of **spirituality**, **decency**, **integrity**, **morality** and **virtue** have been **torn** down and set **afire**. It's **clear** that the church **today** is a mere **shell** of its former self. Our own **SBC** has numerous Pastors accused of misconduct today, putting **our** denomination under the same **scrutiny** as the **Catholic** Church. Our total **membership** is the **lowest** in 30 years. In 2002 we **peaked** at 16.2 million members. We ended 2018 with 14.87 million. Our **baptism** numbers were **down** by over 3% last year. The **gates** of **glory** that **identified** the **church** as the house of God have been **burned** by the **flames** of **sin** and **tarnished** by the **blight** of **apathy**. **How** can we turn the **tide**? By having "**Vision** in our **Souls** and **Fire** in our **Bellies** for the **Future!**" **Couple that** with enthusiastic **Love** and **Tenderness** for one **another** and the **people** of our **Commission** and we **Will** be victorious people!

I have **Good News** for you today. We **can become** those **people!** We can **determine** to **be** the **people** God **uses** to make a **difference** in **our world** for **His kingdom!** God has **Issued** a **Clarion Call** to us! That **Call** is – "**Wanted: People Of Vision!**" I **want** to be an **enthusiastic Pastor** of **Vision**, and I **believe** you **want** to be enthusiastic **People** of **Vision!** If we become **enthusiastic** people of **Vision Together**, **Jesus** will grow a **great** congregation in this place and **God** will get the **Glory!** SO, **What Does It Look Like To Be People Of Enthusiastic Vision?** First,

1. Enthusiastic vision people still Encounter Problems.

There is a **Calm** before the storm of **Enthusiastic Vision**. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. His life was **peaceful**, **prosperous** and **powerful**. His **job** was to taste all the king's food to prevent the **king** from being poisoned. He was one of the most **trusted** men in the kingdom. The king often asked Nehemiah for advice. Nehemiah was living the **good** life, wearing fine robes and sweet perfumes!

But there is Calamity when we embrace Enthusiastic Vision. Nehemiah's **peace** and **serenity** were **shattered** by a visit from one of his brethren. Hanani told him the people of Israel were being **afflicted** by their enemies and the city of **Jerusalem** was devastated and in a state of **calamity**. Isn't it **amazing** how life can be **perfect** one minute and fall all to **pieces** the **next**? I saw an Allstate commercial the other day. John is at the gym working out when his cell phone **security** app shows someone approaching his front door. "Who are **you**?" he asks. "Hi, John! My name is **Mayhem**! I'm here to **steal** your car, because, **well**, that's my **job**!" **Mayhem** then breaks the door glass to steal John's car, and to add **insult** to injury, he runs **over** John's **motorcycle**! Who runs **over** a man's motorcycle?! But that's how **mayhem** and **calamity** work. What **causes** mayhem and calamity? Destruction, conflict, disruption. In **one word** – **Change**!

Life was calm and **good** for Nehemiah, working for the King. But when he heard the walls of Jerusalem were in disrepair, he knew the **Temple** of God was **vulnerable**. He knew something had to **change**. Nehemiah had a **vision** for the **future** of Jerusalem. **Family**, when **Jesus Followers** are **Not** attacking the gates of **Hell**, Satan leaves you **alone**. When we enthusiastically follow God's **vision** and **mission** for the church, **he** gets **scared**. He **knows** the Holy Spirit living in **us** is **Much** more powerful than all his **demons**. Satan **knows** that the H.S. makes us **More** than conquerors. Jesus Christ **annihilated** Satan, and **so** can we! And then,

Our Compassion for others enhances our enthusiastic vision. After hearing the awful news, Nehemiah's **heart** breaks and he enters a season of fasting, weeping and **prayer**. Instead of being **happy** in his **position**, his life is **shattered** and he's brought to his knees! **Watch This:** The first thing Nehemiah does is **Pray**! **Here's** how God **forms** people of **vision**! He **stirs** up your **life**. He **Grabs** you by the **heart** and focuses your **mind** on the things that **truly** matter. For Nehemiah, the question King Artaxerxes asked in **2:2** "**Why are you so sad?**" was the **pivotal** moment of his life. He cared **deeply** about the people of Israel and God **used** that to **work** in his **heart**. You see, God **wanted** to **restore** Jerusalem, but He **needed** a man of **fire**, **vision** and **tenderness** to bring it to pass. Nehemiah was **that** man, and he was eager to get **involved** in what God wanted to do.

When God **stirs** up your life, that is His **call** for you to **buy** into what He is about to do. When the **Call** came for **Isaiah**, he responded eagerly to God's invitation. "Here am I, **send** me!" **Jonah** ran to the Sea to try to **escape** the **Call**. **Moses** saw the **vision**, but made **excuses** and tried to convince God to go find someone **else**. God is trying to get **your** attention today. He's **stirring** up your lives and placing a **burden** on your hearts, to **win your world for Jesus**! It's time to get onboard! **Listen** - Nothing is greater than being a part of **God's** plan! **Compassion** causes us to **want** to be God's **Vision People**. Secondly,

2. Enthusiastic vision people Exercise Prayer.

Nehemiah's prayer to the Lord shows **us** how to be people of **vision**. He **teaches** us visionary **praying**.

Visionary Prayer Includes Praise. Nehemiah begins his prayer by **exalting** the Lord. He praises God for His **Superiority**, His **Strength**, His **Sovereignty**, His **Sacredness** and His **Sincerity**. Shucks, that'll **preach**! Nehemiah **praises** God for **Who** He is! That's a lesson we **all** need to learn! After all, that's how Jesus taught His disciples to pray. **Matt. 6:9** "Our Father in Heaven, **Holy** is **YOUR** name." **Psa. 100:4** "Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name." **Praise Him** when you pray.

Visionary Prayer Includes Perseverance. Nehemiah prayed "**day and night.**" He prayed non-stop until the answer **came**. We need **that** kind of praying **today**. Not the once or twice prayers. We need prayers that never cease until God has answers them. In **Luke 18:1** Jesus tells His disciples "**always** pray and **never** give up." Paul said "Pray without **ceasing.**" Prayer that is born out of a **genuine burden** and **need** cannot be **satisfied** until it is **answered**! If we can pray for something once or twice and forget about it, we should ask ourselves whether or not we were **truly** praying from a **burdened** heart! Persevere in your praying.

Visionary Prayer Includes Penitence. As Nehemiah prays, he **confesses** sin. **First** he confesses his **own** sin, **then** he confesses the sins of His **people**. Repentance is **essential** to **answered** prayer. **Psa. 66:18.** "If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Nehemiah wasn't just telling God where **others** had gone wrong, he was also telling God where **he** had missed the mark. **Repentance** is first of all about **me** getting **my** heart right with God! Have **YOU** repented of **your** sin? Get your **heart** right with God!

Visionary Praying Includes Promises. Nehemiah reminds **God** of the promises He made to Israel. **Promises** to **punish** their **sins** but also to **restore** them if they repented. (**Note:** When **prayer** is from a believer, **based** on the **Word** of God and **founded** on the **promises** of God, the **believer** can be **sure** his prayers will be answered. **Why?** Because God staked His **reputation** on the **accuracy** of His Word. **Psa. 138:2-3** “I praise Your name for Your unfailing love and faithfulness; for Your **promises** are **backed** by all the **honor** of Your name. As soon as I pray, You **answer** me; You **encourage** me by giving me **strength**.” God says His promises will **always** be fulfilled, **Rom. 4:20-21** “Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was **fully** convinced that God is **able** to do **Whatever** He promises.” I **believe** the **Promises** of my God! Do you?

Visionary Praying Includes Partners. – In 2:11 Nehemiah **reminds** God that many **others** were involved in this prayer effort. Nehemiah was part of a **team** effort in **prayer** and **action**. We have a weekly **prayer** list so we can get as **many** people as **possible** involved in praying **with, for, and about** the needs of our congregation. There is **power** in **corporate** prayer - **Matt. 18:19** “I also tell you this; if two of you agree here on earth concerning **anything** you ask, My Father in Heaven will **do** it for you.”

Visionary Praying Includes Petitions. Now Nehemiah reveals what’s on his heart. He is asking God to give him **grace** from the king. He **knows** that to prevail with **man**, we must **prevail** with the **Lord!** Part of **our** praying is expressing our **needs** to the Lord, **Phil. 4:6** “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. **Tell** God what you need, and **thank** Him for all that He has done.” The Lord already knows what you need, but He wants you to **ask!** That way you can **recognize** His **provision** for your life. Thirdly,
3. Enthusiastic Vision People Embrace God’s Purpose for their lives.

Nehemiah knew that **who** he was and **where** he was right this **moment** was **no** accident! It was a **God** thing.

Position Is A God-Thing. - **Regardless** of your **position** in life, at church, at work, at school, in society, at home, or wherever, you need to **know** that it is **no** accident! God has **placed** you there for a **purpose**. For **His** purpose! You **are** where you **are** for God’s **glory!** Do you **GET THAT?** **Esther 4:14** “If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for **just such a time** as **this?**”

Prosperity Is A God-Thing. - Your **resources** are not **yours** by **luck!** They have been **given** to you by the **providence** of God to be **used** for **His** glory. I’ve learned a couple **very** important **monetary** principles in my life. 1. God already **owns** it **all!** We are **stewards** of a **portion** of what is **His**, and he **wants** us to be **generous** and **cheerful** in using **our** resources to **increase** His **kingdom** and **bless** other **people**. 2. You **Cannot** out give God! **Malachi 3:10** “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in My Temple. If you do, says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will **open** the windows of Heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so **great** you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put **Me** to the test!” When I **counsel** people on **financial** issues, I ask “Do you **tithe?**” If they answer “**No**”, my response is – “There’s your **first** problem.” I don’t care if you make \$10 a week or \$10,000 a week, you should **tithe**. It’s **scriptural**, it’s **needful**, and it’s **beneficial** to **all** concerned. Use your **prosperity** to bring **people** to God’s Kingdom.

Power Is A God-Thing. – The **power** and **influence** you have in the lives of others is **no** accident! God has **given** you the **ear** of **certain** people for a **purpose**. **Allow** God to **use** you where you **are** for His **glory**.

Vance Havner said “I thank God for the Unseen Hand, sometimes urging me onward, sometimes holding me back; sometimes with a caress of approval, sometimes with a stroke of reproof; sometimes correcting, sometimes comforting. My times are in His hands.”

When we **met** Nehemiah he was wearing the **fine** robes of the King’s **cupbearer**. He had a **Position** of **Power**, but his **Heartbeat** was for the **people** of Israel. When he found out the Temple was being rebuilt, but the protective **walls** around the city had been destroyed, **God Gave Him A Vision!** Nehemiah asked God to **Use** him to **save Jerusalem**, its **people**, and the **Temple** by allowing **him** to **lead** the **people** in **Rebuilding** the **Walls**.

Years ago God gave **Me** a **Vision** for HBC. Now I see that God was **preparing Me** for just such a **time** as this, like he did **Nehemiah** and **Esther**. I have a **heart** for this **church**, for **you**, and for **SW MO**. God has **Called Me** to **Lead You** in **Rebuilding**.

So it's **time** to **Slather** some **Gravy** on some **Taters!** Let's get **Real Up In Here.** Do you **believe** God is **Real?** Do you **believe** God is **Real** in **You?** Do you **Know** His Holy **Spirit** lives **Inside** you. If Jesus **lives** in you, He wants **you** to **Yield** to His **Lordship** in your life. When you **Yield** to Christ, He makes a **difference!** He **Changes** you from the **Inside** out. Dan V.W. had surgery on his foot, and now he has a **Wound Vacuum** attached to it. I've had them 3 times. The wound vacuum **Sucks** the **Ugly, Nasty, Rotten Corruption** out of your body, creates granulation, and **heals** your wound from the **inside** out. Now **Watch This:** Jesus is like a **Wound Vac.** If you **allow** Him to be **Lord,** He will **Suck** out the **Ugly, Nasty, Rotten Corruption** and **heal** you from the inside out! **Praise His Name!**

Nehemiah **exchanged** his fine **robes** for **coveralls** and got to **work** rebuilding the walls. The **project** was a **Serious** uphill battle! Nehemiah was **accused** of everything from faulty construction to being a power hungry dictator. In spite of grumpy workers and lurking enemies, Nehemiah kept **encouraging** and **leading** the people and they **completed** the project of building the walls, probably 22-24 ft. tall, around the **entire** city of Jerusalem in just 52 days! It was a **tremendous victory!** The people **rejoiced** and Nehemiah **returned** to Persia. 12 years later he returned to Jerusalem to find the **walls** standing **strong,** but the **people** had gone to **seed!** **Faithfulness** and **holiness** had been **abandoned** and spiritual **discipline** was non-existent. So Nehemiah went to work **again.** He went to his **closet,** hanging up his royal robes, **bypassing** his coveralls and donning his priestly **frock** for the task of **Rebuilding** the **Spiritual** foundations of **decency, integrity, morality, faithfulness, and holiness.** Merchants were selling goods in the city on the Sabbath. Many Jewish men had married **pagan** women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. Half their **children** couldn't even **speak** Hebrew! Nehemiah didn't **mince** his words. **13:25** "So I confronted them and called down **curses** on them. I **beat** some of them and pulled out their **hair.** I made them **swear** in the name of God that they would **not** let their children intermarry with the **pagan** people of the land." **13:27** "How could you even **think** of committing this **sinful** deed and acting **unfaithfully** toward God by marrying foreign women?" First Nehemiah led in rebuilding the physical **Walls** and **now** he leads in rebuilding the **Spiritual foundations.**

My **Vision** from God for HBC is in the **Opposite** order of Nehemiah's. **First,** we will build the **Foundations** for **ministry.** I am developing three **Discipleship Modules** to set those **foundations.** **Look At Me** – These three **Modules** are **Key** to our **future** and they are **Absolutely Essential** for our church **growth.** I believe **you** are **ready** to see HBC turn **around** and start **reaching** and **discipling** people for **Jesus.** I believe you **Want** to see HBC grow. **AMEN?** To **that** end - We will set the **Foundations First,** and **then** we will **Build.** That way we **know** the **growth** will be **sustainable.**

My **Goal** is to **prepare** three **Discipleship Modules** and begin **using** them on Sunday **evenings** in **September.** Each weekly **session** will be **one** hour. **Completing** the three modules will take about a **year.** **After** that, the modules will be **ongoing** and **facilitated** by **other** trained leaders in **small** groups on Sunday **morning.** I will **equip** **them** and **you** for **ministry** according to God's **vision** and my scriptural **mandate.** But I will **Not** do the work **for** you. I will **lead** by example, but **ultimately,** the future **growth** of HBC lies in **Your** **willingness** to consistently **Attend** on Sunday **evenings** and **allow** yourselves to be trained, then **prayerfully** put into **practice** what you **learn.** Let's not **mince** words – **Most** of you here **today** do **Not** come on Sunday evenings. I **Know** it's hard! **But** is it **Too Hard?** Is it too **much** of a **commitment** for Christ's Kingdom? Is it **TOO** difficult a commitment if it means just **ONE** person going to **Heaven** instead of **Hell?** Is it **too** much to ask **even** if you only get to disciple **one** other person to Christian **maturity** as a Jesus follower?

There are **many** Jesus followers worldwide whose **commitment** to Christ is causing **them** to suffer **persecution, prison, torture** and even **death!** Each year "Open Doors" prints a "Top 50 World Watch List" of places it's **dangerous** to be a Christian. Approximately 215 **million** Christians experience high, **very** high, or **extreme** levels of **persecution.** 1 in 12 Christians worldwide live where Christianity is "**illegal, forbidden, or punished.**" North Korea alone has 50,000 **Christians** in prisons or labor camps, and countless believers have been **martyred** for their faith. **Those** are the kind of **people** Jesus will **use** to **change** our **world** in these **last** days. **Question:** Do **you** want to be **one** of those **people?** I'm **not** asking you to suffer **physical** persecution, torture, prison, or death! I'm **asking** you to **Believe** that working **together** under the **Lordship** of **Christ,** we can **change** our **corner** of the **world!** Do **You Believe** that today? I **Believe** that today!

So, as the **praise** team comes, let me tell you how I want you to **respond** to **Jesus**? If you need **Jesus** in your **heart**, let's get **that** settled **first**. If you need a church **home**, I invite you to **come** and "**Grow With Us!**" **Otherwise**, I'm **asking Every Last One Of You** to be a **vital** and **productive** part of the future **growth** of HBC by **committing** yourself to our Sunday evening **Discipleship Modules. People** – that's **not** much to ask! **Come** individually, come as couples, or come as families, and **say** –"**WE** want to be **part** of the **VISION** for HBC. **You** and **God** can **count** on **us**. **We'll be here** for the **Discipleship Modules**, and we'll let God **use** us for **His** glory." **Come Now!** Fill up the aisle as you take your **stand** for Christ and verbally **share** your **enthusiastic** commitment to be **People OF Vision** at HBC. **Come Now.**