

**HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK:
A LEADER – FROM THE KNEES UP!**

A. BACKGROUND

- I've recently been re-reading a powerful book by Pastor Charles Swindoll on leadership – “*Hand me another Brick*”. He draws deep insights from Nehemiah’s life—principles that aren’t just for pastors or politicians, but for everyday men who want to lead with integrity.
- There was one message in particular that hit me hard. It was titled: “**A Leader – From the Knees Up.**” Nehemiah shows us that leadership—godly, powerful, effective leadership—doesn’t begin with vision, strategy, or bold speeches. It begins **from the knees up**.
- Let’s go there now—Nehemiah 1:1–11.

The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

³ *They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”*

⁴ *When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said: “Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s family, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

⁸ *“Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’*

¹⁰ *“They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”*

I was cupbearer to the king.

B. THE BURDEN BEFORE THE BUILD

- **Scripture:** Nehemiah 1:1-4
- **Summary:** Nehemiah's heart is pierced by the report from Jerusalem—God’s city lies exposed, its people disgraced. But he doesn't shake his head and move on. He *sits down*, he *weeps*, and he *mourns*. This is not passive grief—it’s active intercession. Though he’s a cupbearer in a palace far from the rubble of Jerusalem, Nehemiah allows the pain of others to become his burden. His heart breaks for what breaks God’s heart. He embraces the emotional weight of the need before ever drafting a plan.
- **Key Truth:** Before God gives a leader vision, He often gives them a burden. Spiritual leadership begins not with *clarity of vision* but with *clarity of heart*. Before

Nehemiah builds the wall, God builds compassion in him. This echoes Jesus' response to the crowds in Matthew 9:36: "He saw the crowds and had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless." Burden always precedes breakthrough in godly leadership.

- **Reflection:** True leaders don't begin with action; they begin with awareness and holy lament. *What burden has God allowed to touch your heart? Have you become callous or tender? Are you ignoring the pain of your city, your family, your church—or have you allowed it to move you to tears and prayer?*

C. POSTURE OF A LEADER

- **Scripture:** Nehemiah 1:4-7
- **Summary:** Nehemiah doesn't use his palace access to immediately schedule a political solution. His first move is not toward the king—but toward *the King of Heaven*. He fasts and prays. He doesn't just express sadness—he engages in sacred surrender. He confesses the sins of Israel *and himself*, acknowledging the covenant they have broken. He doesn't excuse himself from the failure. Instead, he owns it.
- **Key Truth:** The true posture of leadership is humility before God, not authority over people. Leadership that pleases God starts in repentance, not entitlement. Nehemiah understood what Isaiah later declared: "In repentance and rest is your salvation" (Isaiah 30:15). He knew the covenant story of Deuteronomy—that exile was not just a political misfortune, but a spiritual consequence.
- **Reflection:** *Do you try to lead without bowing first? When facing opposition or brokenness, is your instinct to kneel before God or rise up in defence? In what ways might pride or self-reliance be hindering your ability to lead well?*

D. THE PRAYER THAT LEADS THE PLAN

- **Scripture:** Nehemiah 1:5–11
- **Summary:** Nehemiah's prayer is bold and theologically rich. He praises God for His covenant faithfulness. He reminds God of His promises, not because God forgets, but because Nehemiah aligns himself with those promises. He prays specifically, passionately, and strategically. He concludes by asking for divine favor with King Artaxerxes—a man with power to bless or block Nehemiah's mission.
- **Key Truth:** Prayer isn't a formality—it's the *strategy meeting* with God before we move. Plans without prayer may succeed in the eyes of man, but they lack eternal fruit. This prayer is covenantal and rooted in Scripture. Nehemiah quotes God's promises from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 30. Leaders who know the Word will pray the Word—and God honours that alignment.
- **Reflection:** *Are your leadership plans bathed in prayer, or are they fueled by stress and self-effort? What promises from God's Word are you praying over your family, your work, your ministry? When you face an immovable obstacle, do you first look to your influence or to God's sovereignty?*

E. THE FIVE MARKS OF A SPIRITUAL LEADER

- **Scripture:** Nehemiah 1:4–11

- 1) **Recognition of the Need:** *“When I heard these words...” (v.4).* Nehemiah doesn't deny the report. He listens. He absorbs. He sees the people's pain.
 - ✓ **Leadership Insight:** God cannot use a blind leader. If we don't see the ruins, we cannot rebuild the walls.
 - ✓ **Reflection:** What brokenness in your family, marriage, or community have you grown numb to?

- 2) **Personal Concern for the Problem:** *“...I sat down and wept...” (v.4).* Nehemiah makes the need his own. He doesn't outsource empathy. He weeps with those who weep.
 - ✓ **Leadership Insight:** Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb—He didn't just quote theology. Nehemiah weeps before he works.
 - ✓ **Reflection:** Do you allow yourself to feel deeply for the people God has called you to lead?

- 3) **Going First to God in Prayer:** *“...I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” (v.4).* No emails. No action steps. Just holy dependence.
 - ✓ **Leadership Insight:** Your leadership ceiling is determined by your prayer floor.
 - ✓ **Reflection:** What does your prayer life look like *before* the crisis hits? Are you building a foundation or reacting from panic?

- 4) **Confession of Personal Responsibility:** *“We have sinned... I and my father's house...” (v.6–7).* Nehemiah doesn't shift blame. He includes himself. He is humble before he is heroic.
 - ✓ **Leadership Insight:** The most dangerous leader is the one who never repents or fails to recognise their part in both the problem and solution.
 - ✓ **Reflection:** Are there sins of commission or omission you need to bring before the Lord, before you attempt to lead others?

- 5) **Willingness to Be Part of the Solution:** *“Make your servant successful today...” (v.11).* Nehemiah doesn't just pray for revival—he offers himself as the tool.
 - ✓ **Leadership Insight:** Many leaders want God to fix the wall, but few are willing to pick up the first brick.
 - ✓ **Reflection:** Are you praying for change while remaining unavailable? Or are you ready to be the one God uses?

F. PRAYER IS THE COMPASS

- **Summary:** Prayer isn't just the start—it's the **steering mechanism** for every step. It reveals, corrects, and aligns. When the journey gets foggy, prayer brings us back to true north.
- **Key Truth:** Prayer recalibrates our internal compass to God's will, not our ambition. Four Compass Questions:

- **Lost?** → Prayer realigns you to God's **purpose**
 - **Anxious?** → Prayer centers you in **peace**
 - **Impatient?** → Prayer trains you in God's **timing**
 - **Hesitant?** → Prayer strengthens your **faith**
- **Reflection:** *Which of these four areas do you feel most challenged in right now? What would it look like to consistently bring that to God in prayer?*

Brothers, leadership is not about charisma, credentials, or control. It's about surrender. It's not about how high you climb, but how low you're willing to kneel.

Before Nehemiah picked up one stone... he wept, fasted, confessed, prayed, and waited. That is the soil from which godly leadership grows.