

From Outcry to Outcome: The Nehemiah Vision Model

Dusty Rhodes

June 12, 2022

[Dusty Rhodes "From Outcry to Outcome - The Nehemiah Vision Model" - HisAir.Net](#)



As you lead your media ministry there are likely times you sense a new vision is stirring inside you. Questions may arise such as what will we do next, how will we get there, how will staff play a role, what increased costs might we incur along the way, what results do we want to see.

When a leader thinks about launching a new vision, there are many good books and resources to peruse. I recommend starting with the story of Nehemiah in the Bible. It is not the only biblical model of visionary leadership, but I find it to be both compelling and instructional for leaders to consider. I identify at least 4 leadership responsibilities in his story for what I simply call the *Nehemiah Vision Model*: Burden Before BHAG, Raising Resources, Protecting Culture and Celebrating Results.

Burden Before BHAG (Chapter 1)

Some vision processes start with creating what many call a Big Hairy Audacious Goal or BHAG. Often key staff gather to answer questions like 'why do we exist,' or 'what are we trying to accomplish.' To be sure those and other probing questions are an important part of the process. But in Nehemiah's process, before there was a BHAG there was a burden.

We read, while serving in Persia under King Artaxerxes as the king's cup-bearer, Nehemiah learned that back home in Jerusalem the city walls and gates had been destroyed causing the Jewish people to live in disgrace. Nehemiah's immediate response was to weep, mourn, fast, and pray gut-wrenching prayers; an outcry from his heart. And he continued for about 4 months. In fact it appears he spent more days *praying* over the vision than the number of days he spent *accomplishing* the vision. If you ever wondered what part of the vision process matters most, this may be a clue. You may not need to spend months praying about it. But it is worth some amount of time.

What about you and your ministry...What's the urgent problem your organization is trying to solve, or the need it's trying to meet, or the "villain" it's trying to defeat? Is it in a life, in a community, is it urgent? Does your vision process begin like an academic exercise, or more like a burden from God as if He is birthing something new? Does it break your heart to see this need remain unmet and cause an outcry from inside you?

I have lost count how many times I've watched a Compassion representative with tears in their eyes tell a story of a child in poverty who needs a sponsor. They made me feel something and that feeling motivated me to

want to help them. I think this can be true about a vision. In the end, it's not about how a vision can make your ministry bigger or stronger, though that may be one of the outcomes. It's about how your vision impacts more lives for Jesus! You may find it beneficial to challenge your staff to join you in this process because, being on the front lines, they will also likely have a heart-felt sense how God may use your ministry to reach more people.

It's not about how a vision can make your ministry bigger or stronger, though that may be one of the outcomes. It's about how your vision can impact more lives for Jesus!

Once Nehemiah had his vision, his next move was to get it funded.

Raising Resources (Chapter 2)

After praying to God about next steps Nehemiah turned to perhaps the only prospective major gift donor he knew, but who just happened to be the King of Persia. He humbly approached King Artaxerxes and shared his burden to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city. The king was moved and responded in the way every nonprofit leader hopes to hear a donor say, "How can I help you?" Nehemiah gave him his wish list. The king granted him permission to go. He also fulfilled every request on the list, and more! Nehemiah left for Jerusalem with the resources needed to rebuild the city walls and gates.

Once Nehemiah arrived he was strategic about assessing the situation and rolling out his vision. At the right time he boldly articulated the problem, the solution, and an invitation for his listeners to join him in a great work. He declared clearly and concisely, "You know the tragedy of our city, it lies in ruins and its gates are burned. Let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem...God will help us succeed." The people got it responding in kind, "Let's rebuild the wall!"

If your vision is about reaching more people or having more impact, it likely comes with more costs. Your fundraising team will need your encouragement and your help raising funds. You don't have to be the best fundraiser in your organization. But if you are the top leader, it is incumbent upon you to at least do what you can. Besides helping raise gifts, your position allows you to do things other staff cannot such as find money in your budget by reallocating funds. It will be important for your team to see you personally involved in some way. By having a title of President or CEO you can likely raise funds by simply using your position. Even if you know only one donor, like Nehemiah did, meet with them. Do not underestimate your "positional power" and how important it will be for your team to see you go first. You may learn later it was more encouraging for your team to see you step out, than the actual dollars you ended up personally raising! And then like Nehemiah as we'll see, it will be important for you to articulate the vision clearly and consistently.

Do not underestimate your "positional power" and how important it will be for your team to see you go first.

Protecting Culture (Chapters 3-5)

Nehemiah's vision was declared, people embraced it, work began, and then about a minute later resistance revealed itself. The next several chapters document the next several weeks of those who were never onboard to begin with. You can read how Nehemiah swiftly met their opposition each time with prayer and firmness, repeating the vision as often as needed. Efforts to undermine the vision work came from the outside but also from within. The resisters used tactics like sowing discord, intimidation, spreading lies, creating distractions, making threats, expressing anger and even rage. It got so bad at times that the workers were limited to using only one hand to do their work on the wall because their other hand had to hold a weapon for protection. Nehemiah got angry but he also quickly addressed issues as they arose saying, "What you are doing is not right!" He also remained determined to keep the workers focused on God and the vision, reminding them "Don't be afraid of the enemy...our God will fight for us!"

Just having a compelling vision and the resources to execute it will not ensure success. The leader must also protect the culture. Peter Drucker is famously known for stating “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” It means you can have plenty of resources and a great plan, but the health of your workplace culture can ultimately determine its likelihood for success. It is surprising and disheartening how bad some people can be in organizations designed to do good. As with Nehemiah, a President/CEO is the one who ultimately must protect the culture in order to protect the vision. Address issues swiftly and firmly, even face-to-face as Nehemiah did when he said, “You know you are lying...trying to intimidate...to break our resolve and stop the work!” If the top leader does not act effectively, people can become demoralized and the vision can get derailed.

As with Nehemiah, a President/CEO is the one who ultimately must protect the culture in order to protect the vision.

Celebrating Results (Chapters 6-13)

The vision was accomplished when the walls and gates were rebuilt just 52 days after they began! People were so amazed at the progress that even the enemies of Nehemiah could tell “this work had been done with the help of God!” This resulted in nearly 50,000 people returning to the city. This called for a celebration! Nehemiah made sure all the people had food and drink, and even brought in Ezra the priest (the local Billy Graham at the time) for this multi-day event. As Ezra publicly read God’s word each day a change began to happen; people confessed their sins, “crying out to the Lord” they promised to love God and love each other, and joy spread among the people.

When Nehemiah had first arrived in Jerusalem, he found more than broken walls; he found broken lives. His vision was about more than rebuilding the walls of a great city. It was also about spiritual renewal; rebuilding a peoples’ dependence on God. Nehemiah’s initial outcry resulted in life-changing outcomes!

Nehemiah’s initial outcry resulted in life-changing outcomes!

What will be the results of your new vision...a new building, or media platform, additional staff? You can do what Nehemiah did. If your vision is born out of a burden, if resources raised include your participation, and the staff can count on you to protect their workplace culture, your vision can succeed. In the end it is really about how that building or platform or more staff is used to change more lives for Jesus or, as in Nehemiah’s story, change an entire city!

Dusty Rhodes is Chief Development Officer of WGTS 91.9, the 2021 Marconi Award-winning media ministry serving Washington DC and its surrounding communities in Virginia, Maryland, and the Eastern Shore. He has served Christian media & ministries for 40+ years as an award-winning air talent, Program Director, General Manager, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Development Officer, Senior Vice President, board member, and has consulted nonprofit organizations on leadership and fundraising. You can reach Dusty Rhodes at Dusty@WGTS919.com

One thought on “Dusty Rhodes “From Outcry to Outcome – The Nehemiah Vision Model””

Mark Kordic

June 13, 2022 at 6:26 pm

Yes, I wholeheartedly agree! “You may learn later it was more encouraging for your team to see you step out, than the actual dollars you ended up personally raising!” I love the way God released Nehemiah from the idea that he had to shoulder the entire weight of successful leadership by himself. By empowering each family head to be accountable for their portion of the work, he was free to lead. As steward leadership author Dr. Scott Rodin reflects, “(Steward leadership) frees you from
*Laboring under the weight of the expectations of others and our need to please everyone &
*Loss of intimacy with God because of our pursuit of measuring our success and worth by what we accomplish instead of who we are becoming.
Steward leadership begins with surrender and takes us on a daily journey of taking off the chains that bind us and living into the freedom and joy of a leader who starts each day with the conviction that everything belongs to God. Everything.” Thankfully, we have Nehemiah’s example.