

HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK: TIMELESS LESSONS ON LEADERSHIP

Happiness Is a Walk on the Wall
Nehemiah 12:27–47



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Chapter after chapter of Nehemiah is filled with challenges, setbacks, criticism, and sorrow as the returning Jews rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem. But Nehemiah 12 marks a dramatic change. Following the completion of their immense task, the Jews responded with joy—intense happiness. The city overflowed with the sound of singing. Instruments of music blended with the celebration scene as the triumphant tone of rejoicing was heard from afar (Nehemiah 12:43). In this uplifting message, we'll attempt to recreate that happy scene in our minds and glean from it several practical lessons about joy and celebration of God's mighty works.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. Dedication of the Wall (Nehemiah 12:27–43)

Behind Jerusalem's well-constructed wall, a renewed vision brought signs of growth to a barren city. Commerce began to bud again, homes sprouted up, and an influx of new people brought a healthy glow to a city long racked with pain. In Nehemiah 12:27, Nehemiah resumed the movement of his narrative with a description of the preparations for the dedication ceremony.

In order for Nehemiah and Ezra to accomplish the planned celebration, they needed the help of the Levites, a special tribe in Israel responsible for leading worship. The descendants of Levi were specialists in temple and tabernacle activities. If Nehemiah wanted to dedicate the wall for the glory of God, the Levites needed to plan and lead the celebration.

Before the celebration began, the leaders set aside time for purification (Nehemiah 12:30). God instituted the practice of sacrificing animals as a means for His people to receive cleansing from sin. Before the celebration of the wall could begin, before it could be enjoyed without reservation, the people needed pure hearts, cleansed by the confession of sin.

Next, Nehemiah recorded the details of his preparation for the celebration. Imagine dozens, perhaps even hundreds of singers and musicians clambering



Quotable

*Joyful Christians
often enjoy music.*

*Have you noticed
how it's hard
to worry while
singing songs
to God?*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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onto the new wall, grouping themselves together for last-minute vocal and instrumental tuning as the celebration started! Finally, the bands began to play, the choirs sang, and Ezra and Nehemiah set off in opposite directions along the sturdy wall, rejoicing and trampling underfoot the scoffing of their enemies.

2. Dedication of the People (Nehemiah 12:44–47)

In this description of the dedication of the people, it's clear that their joyous celebration and sacrifices transformed them personally. The prevailing spirit of joy encouraged the people to give gladly to the needs of those appointed to oversee the temple (Nehemiah 12:44, 47). Also, they consecrated their lives, committing to keep the Law of Moses. In this way, the ceremony contained a balance of truth and emotion, words and song, and a healthy respect for the ancient traditions of their forefathers (12:45–46).

In addition to singing and maintaining a positive attitude, joy is also expressed through cheerful generosity. Joy affects our attitude toward things we tend to hold on to, such as money and time. Delightfully giving those things away is the *result* of joy as well as often being a *stimulus* for it. When you delight in the Lord, you desire to give to others; when you give to others, you receive joyful satisfaction. They go hand in hand.



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A CLOSER LOOK

The Power of Music

Besides serving as both a cause and effect of joy, music is also a powerful tool for teaching and memorization. Music, particularly singing, is one of the few activities that engages both sides of the brain. This interaction between the right and left brain allows for quicker transmission of information from short-term memory to long-term memory.

Therefore, music is an excellent way to teach truth. The Israelites used this method to transfer vital truths about their God and their history to successive generations. These “hymns of heritage” sustained their identity and unity as a people (see Psalm 44 and 66 for examples).

And consider the numerous hymns, choruses, creeds, and psalms that permeate more recent church history. Music has been the primary tool used to teach doctrinal truth to generations of Christians. Paul exhorted believers in Ephesians 5:19 to “[speak] to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Music is still an integral part of today’s worship.



LET’S LIVE IT

No one who saw or heard the boisterous cheers and praises of the Israelites that day would have had any doubts about the vibrancy of their faith. Let’s take a moment to examine the vitality of our own faith according to these four solid, applicable principles.

First, recognize that *an atmosphere of happiness should surround God’s people*. One of the most magnetic and powerful forces in any ministry or leadership is the presence of joy. Do you contribute to an atmosphere of joy or detract from it? Do you genuinely enjoy getting together with other believers to offer up praise in song and through giving? Are you enjoyable to be around, or do you give off signals that you’d rather not be bothered by people? An atmosphere of joy should be easily apparent when Christians gather together.

Second, realize that *music is one of the most expressive ways to communicate joy*. You would be hard-pressed to find a genuinely happy Christian who doesn’t enjoy either participating in or listening to music. Music has been given by God to enhance the joy of a worship service and inspire the hearts of Christians. It is one of the most expressive ways we can communicate happiness. Whether we play an instrument, harmonize in the choir, sing in the shower, or whistle a tune to our children or grandkids, music tends to flow from us when we have joy in our hearts.



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Third, remember that *a joyful spirit will have far-reaching effects*. What was it that was “heard from afar” when the great choirs sang atop the walls (Nehemiah 12:43)? Not the singing, not the instruments, but “the joy of Jerusalem” (12:43). Even for all the money and equipment spent and used today to deliver the Christian message, no television station, radio tower, or Internet connection can match the magnetic power of Christians exhibiting God’s joy on a day-to-day basis.

Finally, recognize that *joy is not dependent upon outward circumstances but upon inward focus*. If you doubt this, look at the circumstances surrounding the Israelites before, during, and after their celebration. They were still under Persian authority, living in a city filled with rubble, and they were unceasingly hounded by outside enemies who opposed them. But they celebrated with a joy that practically shook the homes of their critics. Why? Because they focused completely on the almighty God. Our circumstances don’t determine whether or not we experience or express joy in the Lord. Regardless of what the world may lead us to believe, happiness is a heart matter.

What circumstances today are robbing you of your joy? As a leader, how can you positively influence those within your realms of leadership by demonstrating joyful attitudes and actions?



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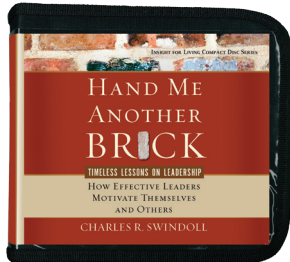
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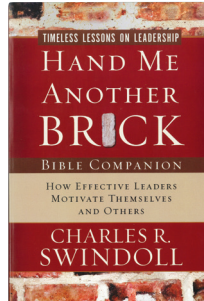
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