

Digging Deeper

with
Pastor Ken

LESSONS LEARNED FROM Nehemiah 1-3

Nehemiah 1 (New King James Version)

Nehemiah Prays for His People

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.

It came to pass in the month of Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan[a] the citadel, 2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are reburned with fire.”

4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5 And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep

Your covenant and mercy with those who love You[b] and observe Your[c] commandments, 6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father’s house and I have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;[d] 9 but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.’[e] 10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. 11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

For I was the king’s cupbearer

Nehemiah 2

Nehemiah Sent to Judah

1 And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. 2 Therefore the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.”

So I became dreadfully afraid, 3 and said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?”

4 Then the king said to me, “What do you request?”

So I prayed to the God of heaven. 5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

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

7 Furthermore I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River,[f] that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, 8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple,[g] for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy." And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

9 Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. 10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official[h] heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.

Nehemiah Views the Wall of Jerusalem

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12 Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. 13 And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire.

14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. 15 So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. 16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

17 Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

20 So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah 3

Rebuilding the Wall

1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred,[i] and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel. 2 Next to Eliashib[j] the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

3 Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. 4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz,[k] made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs. 5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders[l] to the work of their Lord.

6 Moreover Jehoiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and bars. 7 And next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, repaired the residence[m] of the governor of the region beyond the River. 8 Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one[n] of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. 9 And next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. 10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs in front of his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabniah made repairs.

11 Malchijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens. 12 And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.

13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate.

14 Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

15 Shallun the son of Col-Hozeh, leader of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate; he built it, covered it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah by the King's Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David. 16 After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, leader of half the district of Beth Zur, made repairs as far as the place in front of the tombs[o] of David, to the man-made pool, and as far as the House of the Mighty.

17 After him the Levites, under Rehum the son of Bani, made repairs. Next to him Hashabiah, leader of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district. 18 After him their brethren, under Bavai[p] the son of Henadad, leader of the other half of the district of Keilah, made repairs. 19 And next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the leader of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the Ascent to the Armory at the buttress. 20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai[q] carefully repaired the other section, from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz,[r] repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.

22 And after him the priests, the men of the plain, made repairs. 23 After him Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs by his house. 24 After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress, even as far as the corner. 25 Palal the son of Uzai made repairs opposite the buttress, and on the tower which projects from the king's upper house that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh made repairs.

26 Moreover the Nethinim who dwelt in Ophel made repairs as far as the place in front of the Water Gate toward the east, and on the projecting tower. 27 After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.

28 Beyond the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. 29 After them Zadok the son of Immer made repairs in front of his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs. 30 After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah made repairs in front of his dwelling. 31 After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the Nethinim and of the merchants, in front of the Miphkad[s] Gate, and as far as the upper room at the corner. 32 And between the upper room at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

Footnotes:

1. Nehemiah 1:1 Or Susa
2. Nehemiah 1:5 Literally Him
3. Nehemiah 1:5 Literally His
4. Nehemiah 1:8 Leviticus 26:33
5. Nehemiah 1:9 Deuteronomy 30:2 – 5
6. Nehemiah 2:7 That is, the Euphrates, and so elsewhere in this book
7. Nehemiah 2:8 Literally house
8. Nehemiah 2:10 Literally servant, and so elsewhere in this book
9. Nehemiah 3:1 Hebrew Hammeah, also at 12:39
10. Nehemiah 3:2 Literally On his hand
11. Nehemiah 3:4 Or Hakkoz
12. Nehemiah 3:5 Literally necks
13. Nehemiah 3:7 Literally throne
14. Nehemiah 3:8 Literally the son
15. Nehemiah 3:16 Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read tomb.
16. Nehemiah 3:18 Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Syriac read Binnui (compare verse 24).
17. Nehemiah 3:20 A few Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Vulgate read Zaccai.
18. Nehemiah 3:21 Or Hakkoz
19. Nehemiah 3:31 Literally Inspection or Recruiting

A.

He saw the problem.

His first response was to weep and pray for wisdom before the living Lord of Heaven.

Then he mourned, wept over the problem and prayed to God. Now his natural first response is to REPENT!

It is very important that you see the need before you begin to help others. I remember that in the beginnings of Last Harvest, my eyes were opened to the needs of those suffering from life-dominating problems as I "looked" at the problem. I was in an office overlooking a parking lot where women were coming and going from the abortion clinic next door. I watched them go in non-chalantly and come back out four hours later broken and devastated.

My experience of watching those women hobble to their car where they would sit for an hour weeping and sobbing broke my heart. Watching a young girl come out of the clinic only to find that her boyfriend was no where to be found. Thus, she sat on the curb of the street with her head in her knees weeping in the heat of the hot Texas summer sun. That picture burned in my mind and motivated me to action. On that hot summer day, God prompted me to go downstairs and take a cold Coca-Cola to that girl. I invited her to come in where it was cool to use the phone. Once inside she began to weep and tell me her life story of abuse, incest, and now this boyfriend who had made her have the abortion. When she left, with tears in my eyes, I began to write down what was in my heart.

What has brought you to this place of wanting to help others in need?

What is your prayer for wisdom?

Have you wept over abortion?> (did you watch AbortionNo.com 's abortion video?)

Have you repented over abortion? Have you repented over the complacency, indifference and apathy we see in the churches?

Next: WRITE YOUR VISION DOWN that others might see it and run with it!

B. WRITE YOUR VISION DOWN FOR OTHERS TO SEE

Put your vision on paper. Refine it. Pray over it. Share it with others. Tell it to everyone you can. Pray over it again. Watch God bring the results.

When I began this outreach, I first wrote a simple one page purpose statement. I took that purpose statement and created a brochure that essentially said who and what Last Harvest was going to be. I mailed personally signed letters to close friends and family inviting

them to share in the blessings that were to come. I refined the purpose statement into a one minute and three minute expanded presentation. Those came in handy when asked by a friend what I was doing or when I was invited to share at a function or give a "testimony" at church.

KEYPOINT:

The bottom line: **BE PREPARED AT ALL TIMES!** The Bible tells us to be prepared to give an account of the hope within us at all times. Be prepared to share your vision with anyone who will listen.

C. COUNT THE COST

What costs (financial, time, people, family, things) are you going to incur as you do this work of helping others?

COSTS? Yes, nothing in this world is free. Frankly, while much of the prolife movement is based upon the original hook we all used which was "free services" aimed at drawing women away from the abortion center that was charging them even for the pregnancy test. It was also based on the fact that most CPC orgs and churches are non profit 501-C3 orgs which by default are not supposed to "charge" for services. However, conducting a recovery course will involve possibly several cost factors:

- * Baby sitting (remember there will be an average 10 weeks of meetings. Thus even \$10 paid to keep your kids could cost \$100 before the group is completed.

- * Refreshments (If 8 people attend your group: imagine purchasing a large bottle of Sprite and some cookies. Cost only \$4.56. However multiplied by 10 meetings means your cost could be \$45.60 easily.

- * Kleenex® (*Every class uses a bunch of tissue. That could set you back \$3 - \$5 per session; over 10 weeks that could be \$30 to \$50)

- * Handouts (*10 people x 2 handouts would require 20 copies at \$10c a copy.)
Workbooks (\$10 - \$15 - \$20 per student)

- * Advertising (much advertising is word of mouth and through your church. However, you may have to pay local radio or cable advertising time.),

Let's assume that you have expenses of \$400 per support group. Divide the number of participants in the course and let each one give a donation to cover their part of the course for supplies. We find that an average class can easily pay for all its expenses on a suggested donation of about \$25 - \$40 per person. Even for someone without steady income could stretch for \$5 a week over ten weeks. The important factor is that when a person has to pay for something they value it more. When they pay for their workbooks, they tend to use them more and fewer throw their books away.

D. MAKE PROVISION FOR THE OUTREACH YOU ARE PLANNING

Raise the money, gather your team of coworkers, locate where and when the group will meet. As you learn about FREE ME TO LIVE you will see the need for handkerchief dolls, a baby casket, bags with long tie strings which are tools used in the course. Get these things organized before you start a group.

Check with your local mortuary or funeral home. They are providers of casket lines. Tell them what you are doing and that you are creating a memorial service for the women that have lost their babies due to abortion and miscarriage. We have seen a number of groups be given a casket because the funeral home understood the importance of the work being done. Others have had a carpentry -able man build them a casket which is then lined and covered before use. Be creative. However, get these things done before you start a group.

PREPARATION NOTES (as used with a FREE ME TO LIVE Support Group)

These are the actual notes I have provided my own facilitators for years. Read over these notes to gain more of a perspective of the 'big picture' of what goes into a support group.

Before you start any group, it is important that you prepare both yourself, your co-leaders, your Crisis Pregnancy Center or Church and your spouse and children for the work you are about to do.

Check your own heart. Is your motivation correct? Why are you wanting to help? If you have not been called by God, and confirmed by others, then reconsider now. The last place you want to be is inside a recovery group with serious hurts asking for help if you are not called to be there. You can do great damage to the individuals if you are not right with God.

Is there unconfessed sin in your life? Is there an area you have not allowed yourself to deal with? It is far better to deal with it before the group than to get inside a group as a leader only to fall apart because of your own pain.

Establish your CARE TEAM with people who you can trust and know well enough to work with during the group. Never, Never, Never attempt to lead a support group of multiple women alone. You need multiple eyes and ears to read all the body language when a class is in session. Among your team of co-leaders, I recommend you insure that your team offers: sympathy - (I care about you), empathy - (been there done that and know what you must be feeling right now) and objectivity - (someone to keep the class on track)

Have you gone through the course once for your own self? We highly recommend that before you lead a group, that you take the FREE ME TO LIVE manual and work through it page by page with your CARETEAM leaders. This will do two things. Help familiarize each of you with FREE ME TO LIVE from the participants perspective. Help you deal with any issues that need to be address before you attempt to help others.

Make sure you have all your books and tools in place. Allow at least 3 weeks for your books to arrive unless you are prepared to pay high shipping costs. A typical Next day are can cost \$70 or more. All books are shipped UPS because of the high loss rate we have experience with the Post Office. To order, [Click Here to Order](#)

What are you going to do for the closure exercises. We recommend finding a local retreat where you can go for a weekend away from the kids. Give the participants a time to get away from their everyday stresses so that they can have quality time to deal with their letting go exercises. If you need help locating a local retreat center, contact area churches who often use retreat centers for their youth and adult getaways. The ideal retreat will offer you a private area for your meeting (ie free of interruptions from other guests) and access to a pond or small lake. These are excellent places to hold the letting go object lessons.

For the letting go exercises, you will need white helium filled balloons with long strings of white string. These should be filled the day you are planning to use them. When I am in a city away from home, I normally locate a grocery store near the meeting facility that has a rose or flower department. They normally have helium balloons. For the stones throw, we suggest creating a number of soft handmade cloth bags with large draw strings. [Click Here: HOW TO MAKE A STONES BAG](#)

For the memorial service, you will need men's handkerchiefs, strands of pink and blue ribbon, and a bag of cotton balls. We recommend that during the session on identifying their baby they be given these tools as an exercise while they talk through their feelings. It gives them a tactile experience to touch and feel and busy themselves with as they talk about something so deeply within their heart. As they **CREATE A DOLL** they are creating a representation or icon of their missing baby. As they express the baby's name and what they feel deep inside their heart, this exercise allows them to **CREATE** a symbol to use in honoring their little lives that never were.

We suggest you give them the option of taking those dolls home for a week and meditate upon what this child (now with the Lord in Heaven) now means in their life. We have seen them do all sorts of things to memorialize their baby. Some decorate the dolls extensively through the week. Others spend time doing things with the doll, praying, weeping, etc. Give them room to do what they feel they need to do. This doll will be brought to the closure memorial service. At that service you will need an **INFANT CASKET** obtained typically from a local funeral home.

You will also need candles for the each of the babies being honored by the service and a large **JESUS CHRIST** candle. For detailed instructions for conducting a memorial service, please refer to the **ABOUT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE** that will come toward the end of this series. Also, don't forget a CD player and sound system to be able to use the audio vignettes that are part of the My Memorial Kit (2 CDs) or MP3's of your own choosing.

What are you going to offer in the way of followup to the FREE ME TO LIVE course?

The individual needs to be grounded in a Bible believing church to be able to receive long term discipleship, Bible training, growth and spiritual maturity. If the individual is not connected with a local church, please point him or her to Last Harvest Fellowship an online Church Without Walls for those displaced and unreached by a local church, those empty of heart seeking hope, and those who are seeking more of Jesus Christ than they are getting on Sunday morning. Here they can obtain Bible Sytematics study, worship, and connect with other members for online discussions. Additionally, we recommend getting them into groups like Celebrate Recovery, Search for Significance, Bondage Breaker, Bible Study Fellowship, Biblical Counseling Foundation and others.

What do I mean by Biblical Systematics? Unlike churches that teach topical social studies, Last Harvest Fellowship is committed to teaching systematically through the Bible, letting the Scripture stand alone. Rather than add or take away from Scripture, Biblical Systematics insure that the Word remains true to its self. Like the Bereans, you are able to "check it out" against the Bible's own words rather than some preacher's personal opinion.

E. STRATEGICALLY NETWORK WITH OTHERS

Never work alone. Always work as a team. To build your team means finding other people, like yourself, who are called and gifted for a part of this work just like you. Share with everyone you know. Get interviewed on radio. Appeal to the public to join with you. Watch God raise up the workers.

Two heads are better than one (and three are better than two), so it's probably worth your time to find other heads that share your passions and interests and pool your efforts.

Where do you find them? One place on the Internet is CENTERTALK:

CENTERTALK is a discussion forum located at <http://centertalk.cpclink.com>

You should consider joining that discussion board, to post your questions and ideas. Others will drop in and before you know it a community is born.

For after abortion care, consider joining the A.R.I.N. Directory After Abortion Recovery Directory

Be sure your are listed on [www.FindAPregnancyCenter..Com](http://www.FindAPregnancyCenter.Com). List your outreach under After Abortion or the other appropriate categories of service your center offers.

Attend National and Regional Conferences, Trainings, Workshops conducted by the prolife community:

CareNet Annual Conference

Heartbeat Internatioinal Conference

NIFLA

Loving & Caring

Other networking ideas

Your local newspaper or website will list grassroots mini-communities and movements already in place. Attend local events to find contributors to your cause. Churches, synagogues, and other places of worship often hold community events tied to social causes. Connect with other after abortion care leaders in your immediate area.

You can also join virtual communities on social networking websites including MySpace, YouTube, Newsvine, Digg and Stumbled upon. Search for articles and personal profiles that flag the terms "after abortion help" or "post abortion recovery." Just be careful what personally identifiable information you give out to members.

*(Need help building up your social media infrastructure? Consult with the social media specialists of <http://awebstore.com>)

Remember that the goal of proactive networking is not to sit around talking, but to rally support for your own ideas, and spark directed action toward the goal of healing the women and/or men coming to your support group.

F. GUARD YOUR HEART

Understand whose you are. Because you are of Jesus, you have an enemy who will devise plans and schemes to kill, steal, and destroy you. Don't operate in fear, but do operate with a covering. Get with your Pastor. Ask him to cover you spiritually. Organize a prayer team who will cover you, your family, your coworkers as you do this work.

CONSIDER THIS:

"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." - Jeremiah 2:13.

In Jeremiah's day, cisterns were underground reservoirs where rain water was collected for use. Eventually the mud settled at the bottom of the cisterns and the clear upper layers could be used as a source of drinking water. Perhaps this metaphor brings to our mind non-believers who are vainly trying to quench their spiritual thirst by drinking from the world's cisterns. The Samaritan woman who met Jesus beside Jacob's well is a good

example of the human inclination to look for fulfillment and love "in all the wrong places."

However this divine message, delivered through the prophet Jeremiah, was addressed to God's people. Despite all that the Lord had done to free them from slavery and lead them out of Egypt to the land of milk and honey, His people eventually forsook the fountain of living waters "to drink the waters of the Nile." (Jeremiah 2:18). Egypt and the Nile are metaphors for the world and what it has to offer. Like the Israelites, we too have experienced the goodness of the Lord. And like them, we are inclined to forsake the fountain of living waters and to hew for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Thankfully, God is constantly calling us back to Himself. And in this passage He reminds us, once again, that what the world has to offer cannot satisfy the deepest yearnings of our hearts.

G. WATCH FOR A CHANGE OF HEART

But the fact that His people had hewn for themselves broken cisterns was merely a symptom of a deeper problem. God was grieved because His people had "forsaken the devotion of (their) youth and the love of (their) betrothals." (Jeremiah 2:2). Having forsaken their first love, any efforts to keep their adulterous passions in check became an exercise in futility. Their self-destructive behavior merely exposed what had already occurred internally - a change of heart and affections.

When I first gave my heart to Jesus, I naively assumed that I would never again have to deal with the issue of my love and commitment to Him. Since then I've come to realize that there is a need for constant vigilance: "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." (Proverbs 4:23). The Hebrew word for heart (*leb*) refers to more than just our feelings; it is taken from a root word that is best translated "the inner man" - which embodies the mind, will and emotions. Why did the writer of Proverbs exhort us to "post a guard" over our hearts? Because our hearts are prone to misplaced affections. And when the integrity of our inner being is breached, it threatens our emotional, mental and spiritual viability.

Sometimes the things that diminish our passion for God are "good" things that are not sinful or wrong in and of themselves - which is why it is easy to be caught off guard. Recently, I received a letter from an outstanding Christian leader and a dear brother in Christ, who noticed an irony in his own spiritual life: The busier he was in serving God through various leadership positions, the less intimacy he experienced in his relationship with Christ. Having been there myself, I understood what he was talking about.

Countless others have lost their passion for God on the altar of their profession, motivated either by a desire to serve humanity or simply out of a need to feed their own egos. Like Martha, we become caught up in our service for its own sake. We forget that true service (which, by the way, is derived from the same root word as worship), is an

outward expression of our love and devotion to God. And because it is something which flows from a heart that is in tune with God's heart, it is never self-driven.

H. KEEP YOUR FIRST LOVE

"I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love."
- Revelations 2:2-4.

How was it that the church in Ephesus could toil and persevere in the Lord's work, stand up against evil in their day, be vigilant against false doctrine, and endure persecution for His name's sake, only to discover in the end that God was not pleased with them?

Because in the final analysis, the heart of the issue is the issue of the heart. The one thing that God had against the church in Ephesus was the fact that they had left (not lost) their first love.

God has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). So whenever our love relationship with the Lord begins to grow cold, it is always because somewhere along the way we have moved away from Him. In my experience, this is rarely a conscious decision or a willful act of abandonment. Instead, we give our hearts away a piece at a time, often without even realizing what is happening. Gradually, our love for God diminishes. Service to God and to others becomes a heavy burden. In time we may even become totally apathetic to the things of God, unless He graciously intervenes in our lives - and He will if we ask Him to.

I. START OVER WHEN YOU STUMBLE

If we recognize that this is what has happened to us, how can we start over? How do we go about restoring our spiritual passion? God's prescription for restoration is simply this:

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first." (Revelations 2:5).

The first step in personal spiritual revival is to humble ourselves before God and repent. Repentance means a change in attitude which should result in a change of behavior: There must be a willingness to walk away from our love affair with the world. A period of relative obscurity and insulation from the pressures of public opinion may be helpful. We do this not to withdraw from the world, but to draw near to God (James 4:8) so that we can give Him our undivided attention. And in drawing near to God, His Spirit will rekindle our love for Him if we "do the deeds we did at first."

As in any other love relationship, our relationship with God is a romance sustained by discipline; we cannot have one without the other. Romance is nurtured by the discipline of spending regular time with the One we love. We sit in His presence and gaze at His

wonderful face. We observe His mysterious ways and marvel at His love and wisdom. We listen to His gentle voice and share with Him the deepest secrets of our heart. We read His love letters over and over again until we know them by heart. We find out what He is interested in, and join with Him in doing them until we learn to love what He loves.

And then one day, we will discover that once again we are in love. And Jesus, the Lover of our soul, is once again the most important Person in our life!

J. JUST DO IT

Don't wait for someone to tell you to get started: JUST DO IT!

When you do start your outreach, please pray about networking with us and let us help you along the way! If you need a field-proven and time-tested resource, please consider Free Me in Live. <http://freemetolive.com>

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*source: www.maximizemycenter.com "Basics of Effective Recovery Leadership"
Learn the Lesson of Nehemiah*

Maximize My Center (www.maximizemycenter.com) is a distance-learning resource for pregnancy center directors and staff. At the low cost of \$49.95 per seat our training is the lowest cost per training in the industry.

ABOUT THE COURSE: BASICS OF EFFECTIVE RECOVERY LEADERSHIP
Author Ken Freeman, who has been active in after abortion recovery since 1984, has trained over 2,500 directors in the field. Today, his robust, indepth multi-media training is available exclusively at www.maximizemycenter.com. The course is a very indepth look at the basics a person needs to get started in leading an after abortion recovery group.

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