

# DARE GREATLY – Nehemiah a Risk Taker

By Rev. Héctor A. Burgos



Read: [Nehemiah 1:1-11](#)

Prayer: *Gracious God, I give for the endless ways you bless my life, every day. As I now seek to nurture my faith through the Scriptures, open my heart and mind to receive with joy what you have for me today, and grant me the desire and energy to apply it in my lives, for the glory of your name. In Christ, AMEN.*

In my time as a pastor, a leader, and these past few years as a Superintendent in the Capital District, I have come to group people, and leaders, into 2 very basic categories: *The Talkers* and *The Doers*.

The Talkers are those who have an opinion about everything – yet we seldom see them in action. They criticize everything and everyone. They always have a better idea or way of getting things done. And, in their “talking”, they feel they are solving all the problems in the world.

These days, social media has given *the talkers* a platform to go viral (I sometimes don’t want to check my Facebook, simply to avoid them.)

Let’s see if you identify with any of these lines. Talkers say things like:

- *What this church needs is...*
- *I can’t believe our government officials. If I were there, I would...”*
- *Our schools are really in bad shape, someone ought to do something about it”*

Have you met a talker? I think we all have, right?

Grippers, complainers, and self-proclaimed prophets abound. It is easy to analyze, scrutinize, and talk about all the problems in the world. In many ways, it sometimes feels that being *A Talker* has become a hobby and at times even a national sport.

Then, there are a different kind of people – *The Doers*. Those who will not only discuss a situation, but will do something about it, even if it means leaving their comfort zone and taking risks. The prophet Nehemiah was a *Doer* kind of leader. You know, I am a fan of Nehemiah. Through his leadership, I learn in many ways the kind of disciple and servant leader God wants me to be for Christ.

Nehemiah, compared to other Jews of his time, was living a relatively good life. He was a high and trusted government official for the Persian king. He served as a governor and the king's cupbearer. As governor, he managed the region of Persian Judea. And, as cupbearer, he was highly trusted by the king as he guarded against anyone poisoning something the king might drink or eat.

As the scripture tells us in Nehemiah 1:1-11, one day, Nehemiah learned from fellow Jews about the misfortune of the Israelites returning to Jerusalem from exile, and the destruction of the walls and gates of the city – symbols of God's favor and protection of the Israelites.

Everyone was talking about the state of the walls and the gate. Israelites were grieving and lamenting. Some complained about feeling abandoned by God. There was a lot of gossip and wining going around – but no action, just talk. But not Nehemiah, when Nehemiah heard the disturbing news of what was going on with his people, yes, he saw a problem and was distressed, like the others. But instead of complaining or wallowing in self-pity, he acted. The burden of the Israelites, in the best sense of the word, became his burden.

And here is the first point I want to share with you. **When God, as disciples of Christ and servant leaders, makes us aware of a challenging situation affecting others, God does it, not for us to wine and complain, but to do something about it.**

Nehemiah saw a big problem and was distressed. But he also knew that God wanted him to motivate and lead the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Yes, he grieved. He lamented. He mourned. He cried. And then, he acted - at the appropriate time, he asked the king for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild its fallen walls.

Which leads me to the second point I want to share with you. **As disciples of Christ, and servant leaders in the world, there will come times that following God's purpose for our lives, will require that we step out of our comfort zones, and even dare greatly, to move God's vision forward.**

Nehemiah dared greatly and risked everything to pursue God's vision. First, he, a Jew, dared to stand in front of the Persian King and advocate for his people (who happened to

be war prisoners of the Persians). Nehemiah advocated for the reconstruction of the walls and gates of Jerusalem, and he asked for permission to leave his post, and place of privilege, to join his fellow brothers and sisters in this effort. And, if that was not enough, in chapter 2, we read, that he even asked the king for protection for the trip to Jerusalem and supplies for the journey, and materials to rebuild the walls. That's what daring greatly looks like!

**Nehemiah was a *Doer*. He not only talked the talk – he also walked the walk.** He advocated for the Jews, and once he arrived in Jerusalem, he organized the people. He managed the work. He supervised. He encouraged the people. He met the opposition with courage and determination, he confronted injustice, and he kept going at it until the walls were built. Nehemiah was a man of action. A great risk taker for God.

**Some may ask, how was Nehemiah able to transcend the boundaries of The Takers, and be a Doer, in such challenging circumstances?**

When you read the book of Nehemiah, you will see that Nehemiah was a man with vision. That he was a gifted leader and trouble shooter. He mastered the art of conflict transformation, and he knew how to encourage and motivate people to action. (I strongly encourage to read this powerful book in the Bible). But, the answer to the question HOW that is revealed to us in today's passage is FOUNDATIONAL to becoming *Doers, people of action, risk takers for God*.

**Nehemiah had an intimate and transparent relationship with God. Nehemiah trusted God, and fully depended on God for his success.**

Different from us, that many times try to resolve our problem and face our challenges on our own strengths and wisdom, and then when all is set and settled, lift a "ritualistic prayer" asking God to bless *our* plans; when Nehemiah learned about the challenge the Jews were facing, he went to God in prayer, humbly confessed his people sins against God, admitted his need from help, and in faith asked God to provide a way forward for the Israelites.

You see, when God makes us sensible to the suffering around us, the path forward, is impossible on our strengths, and if we are not strongly connected to Christ, we will limit ourselves to *Talk*. But, when our eyes are opened to the needs around us, and we are connected to the source of our faith and hope, Jesus Christ, like Nehemiah, we too, are empowered TO DO, TO RISK, TO DARE, TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

The walls and gate of our Jerusalem – our communities, our nation, the world, are down and destroyed. It does not take much to see the chaos around us. Here is the thing – if you see it, If God, in God's grace make you aware of your neighbors suffering, is not so that you TALK (the world already have enough talkers). God wants you TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

We need to pray to God that the hurt of the world, burns enough in our hearts, individually and collectively, so that like Nehemiah, we too, lift the suffering of the world in prayer, confess our part in it, and ask God for the courage to move into action to address it. Today, we are being invited into an experience and faith that is not limited to ensuring our own sense of wellbeing but that moves us to use our spiritual gifts, our skills, and our life experiences to be a liberating and healing presence to others.

For a moment, imagine a world, were all the *Talkers* become *Doers* of good. Can you imagine it? Can you see it? You know what that reality is called? THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Now, with humility, allow the Spirit to bring to your memory the suffering around you that God has made you aware of, that perhaps all you have done is talk or pray about it (or in the worst case, ignored), and confess to God not being part of the solution, and ask for the courage and boldness to do something about it.

May we hear God today proclaiming: *It's time to rebuild the walls*. And, may we, like Nehemiah, dare greatly, take action, and do whatever we can, do be catalyst of healing in our families, all of our relationships, our church, our workplaces, the community, and in all the places God places us to witness to his love, mercy and justice.

Dare Greatly. Be A Doer. Take Risks. Rebuild the Walls.

AMEN

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