



ENTER God's presence

Then he [the LORD] said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

- Ezekiel 37:4-6

God, time after time your word reveals you to be a God of restoration; that your vision for your people is for them to be restored to a right relationship with you through your son Jesus Christ. Help us to understand more clearly the part you have for us to play in your vision for the Church and for your world, as we gather now around your word, in Jesus name. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week, in your highs and your lows?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. In what ways, if any, has Covid-19 altered or shifted your plans or your vision of the future?
4. How does having a clear vision help drive success?

They've been one of the most searched items on the internet behind toilet paper, sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, baking goods, tech gear and fitness items - the jigsaw puzzle. From 10-1000 pieces or more, there's structure, there's order and it's an activity that builds community (by-standers always join in!). Jigsaws inspire you toward a specific result, engage you and others and their impact always leads to a sense of achievement and joy. Vision works in the same way. Individual and seemingly random, unrelated circumstances - often what looks like chaos - are brought together and connected to form a beautiful masterpiece that is life-transforming, eternity shaping and creates delight for all who participate in it. That's what we'll explore today as Nehemiah recasts vision; a vision not just of a wall rebuilt but of a people restored to their God designed

Week beginning
Sunday 25th July 2021

Worship series:
Road to Recovery



VERSE for the week

Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”

Nehemiah 2:17



REMEMBER this week

A God-given vision will always seem impossible, require great sacrifice, inspire communal action and lead to spiritual transformation.

purpose and work in this world. It's a vision to which Nehemiah invites others to join him in working out a future that's more glorious than people could ever imagine. In chaotic times, we too are called to recast vision and participate in a God-given plan that inspires with hope, fully engages our lives and impacts the community eternally as God leads us out of uncertainty on the Road to Recovery.



LISTEN attentively

Read Nehemiah 2:1-20

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. Compare how Nehemiah presents his vision to the king and then later to the people of Jerusalem. What do you think influences the different ways he presents this vision?**
- 7. What do you think is the difference between having a vision and having a plan?**

In modern English, we tend to use the words 'sight' and 'vision' interchangeably. In many contexts, that's fair enough, vision has always been related to the ability to see. However, a number of years ago, in the blockbuster movie, *'Avatar'*, the native population of the planet 'Pandora' greeted each other with the words, "I see you". They do not only mean the act of physically seeing them standing in space, but imply a deeper level of seeing, understanding and connection. Seeing is one thing, but vision is something greater. Vision involves the act of sight but also a sense of understanding or comprehension about what is seen. It often involves not only seeing what is, but also what could be.

Nehemiah had not physically seen for himself the ruined walls of Jerusalem, he had only heard second hand reports from his brother (Neh1:2-3), but he certainly had a vision of what life back in Jerusalem should have been for people restored to the covenant promises of God. What was reported certainly did not match that vision.

- 8. Often our lives as followers of Jesus do not play out the way we thought they might. In what ways has your vision or expectations of life with Jesus been different than what you have actually experienced?**
- 9. One of the problems with human vision, is that it can be easily diverted or distracted. What do you think is currently the most significant focal point of your vision for your life?**

The reality is that whatever our eyes are fixed on, that is where we will end up travelling. It is also why so many sports coaches will remind their players to 'keep their eyes on the ball'. It is not just a sports cliché, in any ball sport whether it be cricket, football (of any code), tennis, or golf, keeping your eyes on the ball automatically focuses and directs the body's alignment and action to make good contact with the ball. Those who take their eye off the ball are likely to miss it all together.



GROW deeper

It seems clear from the end of Nehemiah chapter 1 and now also from the specific requests that Nehemiah makes of the king, that Nehemiah has a plan. Given the names of the months mentioned in Nehemiah chapter 1 and 2, Nehemiah has been stewing over his plans for about three months before he gets to present his request to the king. Nehemiah has not simply sat idle and said, 'if this is God's will, he will make a way', but he has also not run ahead of God. Instead he patiently waits for the right opportunity to present his request to the king. Let's be honest, a vision without action is just a good idea. Nehemiah's vision drove him to action, and when the right time came – even though he was afraid – he recognized the opportunity and he was ready to take it. He knew what to ask for because he had been busy planning for the execution of the vision God had given him.

- 10. Part of vision, like a jigsaw puzzle, is seeing how parts fit together – sometimes without being able to see the whole picture. What are some of the elements in Nehemiah 2 which you can see contributed to the success of Nehemiah's request of the king?**

- 11. One of the things about Nehemiah's vision is that there was no way he could achieve it on his own – he simply did not have the resources, yet he went ahead trusting God to provide. How often do you think you are put off from visions or a 'God ideas' because you feel some kind of lack, either of ability or resources? Why can it be so hard to overcome this?**

When Nehemiah arrives in Jerusalem, he does not immediately make his intentions known. He stays in the city for three days, then does a wall inspection in the dead of night.

- 12. What reasons do you think Nehemiah may have had for waiting these few days before presenting his vision to the people of the city?**

Sometimes, being a visionary or having a vision, puts you at odds with the established status quo or the ruling majority. Anyone wanting to suggest a new or better way of doing things is likely to be ridiculed initially. Even Jesus found himself flogged and sentenced to death for suggesting that God was doing something new, even though everything he said was completely true. Change is a challenging process for everyone to varying degrees, and the right vision at the right time will inevitably bring change with it. Being prayerful in our approach to the timing of Gods vision is also as important as being prayerful about the vision itself.



LIVE purposefully

God has a unique plan and vision for you and your life. He has given you a unique set of skills, talents, passions, life experiences, and learning, with which to get this particular God given vision accomplished. Every day he gives you opportunities to connect all the gifts and blessings that he has poured into your life and to use them to put the puzzle together for people; to help others see the beauty of the love and grace of Jesus, to help them see God at work in the world, in their lives, and ours. But as we said earlier, a vision without action is just a good idea.

- 13. What will you do so that God's vision for you and your life doesn't just become a 'good idea' but actually becomes your lived reality?**
- 14. Are you confident that you understand God's purpose and plan for you? How might you go about identifying God's vision for your life?**
- 15. What are the things in your life that might be distracting you from God's plan and vision for you at the moment? How will you redirect you focus this week?**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for his vision and plan to restore you to himself and to fulness of life.
- Pray for those who feel lost and who are lacking a sense of purpose and direction, especially those whose employment has ended due to Covid-19.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you deeper into God's plan and purpose for your life.
- Pray for the vision that God is giving us at LifeWay and for the willingness to play our part in that vision.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], you are God's blessing to this world. Amen.