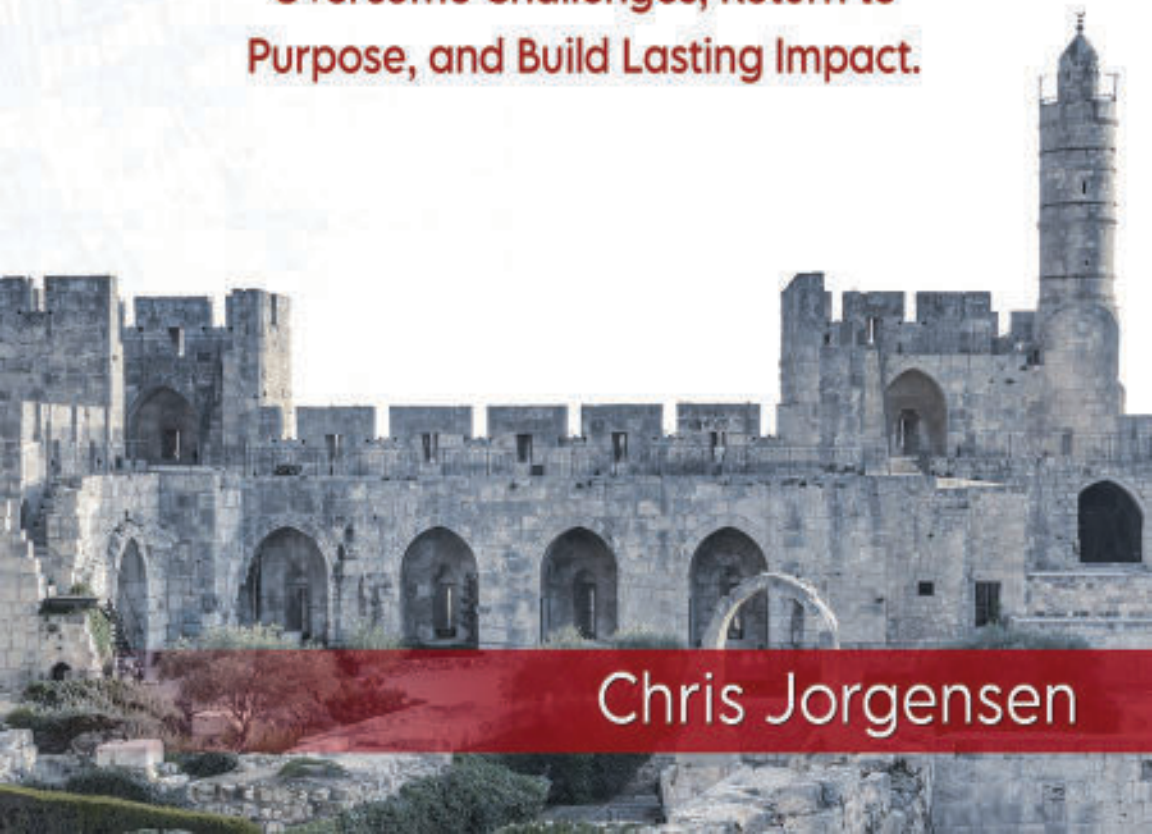
THE NEHEMIAH BLUEPRINT

How Faith-Focused Leaders Can Overcome Challenges, Return to Purpose, and Build Lasting Impact.



Chris Jorgensen

Praise for
The Nehemiah Blueprint

Nehemiah's story has provided great inspiration for generations of Christian leaders. In Chris Jorgensen's book, *The Nehemiah Blueprint*, he brings new life to the lessons and observations from this biblical classic. The blueprint is clear and utterly relevant for today. This book will challenge you to take a personal inventory and help you understand how the trials of life will ultimately bring you to the place where humility, confidence, and maturity define your leadership and influence. I recommend you read it with a mentor, mentee, or small group!

Tami Heim
President and CEO of Christian Leadership Alliance

Wherever you are in your leadership journey, *The Nehemiah Blueprint*, can help you grow into the leader God is calling you to be. With uncommon wisdom and understanding, Chris Jorgensen provides key insights into the core areas where leaders need purpose, perspective, and passion. Here is a story and a resource you can return to again and again to help you cultivate your influence for greatest impact into the things that matter most.

Tom De Vries
President/CEO Citygate Network

Whether you are beginning your leadership journey or a seasoned veteran, *The Nehemiah Blueprint* offers actionable content for all to consider. Looking to the example of the man who accomplished so much in such a short amount of time, and combined with a thorough evaluation of modern leadership research, *The Nehemiah Blueprint* is a practical book for leaders to ponder.

Josh Lindstrom
Lead Pastor of Teaching and Vision at Woodmen Valley Chapel

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The Nehemiah Blueprint is an insightful analysis of the book of Nehemiah as it relates to leadership today. Chris has dug deep into the verses and found the principles that could so easily be missed. This book will cause you to consider important, yet foundational, leadership ideas that you may have been overlooking as well.

Vonna Laue
Ministry Leader and Board Member

The Nehemiah Blueprint bridges the gap between ancient wisdom and modern-day application to leadership in a beautiful way. A must read for any leader seeking to successfully navigate today's challenging landscape!"

Dr. Elia Gourgouris PhD
Author of #1 Best-Selling book 7 Paths to Lasting Happiness

The Nehemiah Blueprint is a helpful step in anyone's leadership journey, a thoughtful and practical guide to living your passion and calling, moving forward with a Godly vision, and preparing you to persevere and lead like a follower of God.

Brad Meuli
25-year President and CEO of the Denver Rescue Mission

The Nehemiah Blueprint is a transformative journey that masterfully decodes the story of Nehemiah, showcasing the power of humility, compromise and passion in effective leadership. A compelling read that not only enriches one's understanding of Nehemiah but also imparts invaluable leadership principles for today's dynamic challenges.

Berta Medina
Author, Coach and Non-profit Board Member

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Chris Jorgensen

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the glory of God.

I wrote this book for leaders. Leaders who have the right intentions but who may be stuck, tired, or weary from the grind of leading through difficult seasons or leaders who simply desire to grow while on their leadership journey. No matter which one applies to you, my prayer is that Nehemiah's leadership example encourages you and transforms your impact!

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CHAPTER 1

Heat and Pressure

I live in Estes Park, Colorado, which is right on the doorstep of Rocky Mountain National Park. The beauty of God's creation in Estes Park draws millions of visitors every year.

From time to time, there is a significant threat of wildfire in the Rocky Mountains, with the worst season arguably being the fall of 2020. Rocky Mountain National Park and the surrounding areas experienced multiple wildfires that were some of the largest in Colorado's history.

The East Troublesome Fire originated in Grand County on the west side of the national park. The fire reached Grand Lake, Colorado, covering a distance of twelve miles in a single day due to incredibly strong winds and extremely dry conditions.

Miles of terrain that sits above the tree line and cross the Continental Divide separates the west side of the national park from the east side. Embers flew over this expanse the evening of October 21st after the fire had ravaged the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park and the Grand Lake community. Previously, a fire climbing over the Continental Divide was thought to be impossible.

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That evening, ash and burnt pine needles were falling from the sky in Estes Park. After a couple of tense days, snow came and subdued the fire, allowing crews to contain it and save the Estes Park community.

When you visit the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park today, you can see the fire's effect on the forest. The immense heat and pressure of the fire is evident.

A once flourishing forest is now transformed. Trees that were previously thriving, tall, growing, and producing now stand blackened, burnt from the flames and intense heat. Many trees are no longer upright, some are bent, some lie broken, and some trees are uprooted.



When I drive through this section of Rocky Mountain National Park, I often wonder why some trees were left standing and others were bent, broken, and uprooted.

Feeling the Heat: The Struggles of Leaders Under Pressure

I cannot help but think about how these trees are a picture, a metaphor, of leaders. As leaders, what do we do when heat, pressure, and challenges arise?

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Do we manage to stay upright, growing in the right direction, staying true to ourselves, while working diligently and intentionally to continually lead like we desire?

Do we manage to stay upright, growing in the right direction, staying true to ourselves, while working diligently and intentionally to continually lead like we desire?

Or do we succumb to the pressure and the immense heat that comes from constantly navigating challenging circumstances? Challenging seasons have always existed for leaders. The season that was COVID-19, and the seasons that followed, presented new challenges at a greater pace and intensity. A pace and intensity that resulted in even more heat and pressure.

Leaders felt heat from limited resources, the pace of work, and workforce challenges. Pressure came from grueling schedules, tremendous uncertainty, and a sheer overwhelming amount of change, both within and outside organizations.

Most leaders set out in their careers with great intentions to help others. Many were motivated by their desire to make a difference, to make an impact on something beyond themselves. Some were motivated by the mission and purpose of the organization they work for.

However, the challenging seasons leaders encounter create immense pressure. The challenges are almost unfathomable. Problems seem borderline unsolvable. It is inevitable that leaders feel burnt, bent, broken, and even uprooted as they endure adversity.

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As I drive through this section of Rocky Mountain National Park, I like to think that I am not a leader who has been burnt, bent, broken, or uprooted by this heat and pressure. However, when I am honest with myself, I realize that I have bent. I have been impacted as a leader. I have made compromises in how I have led through challenging seasons, compromises with how I have interacted, how I led others, and in my own actions. I have succumbed to the exhaustion resulting from the heat and pressure, burnt like trees that once stood flourishing.

In these moments of personal vulnerability, I realize I am no longer growing straight up as a leader, no longer whole. I am wounded. Periodically, I have lost sight of why I do what I do. Some days I have just gone through the motions and have not pursued my passion to help others succeed with the zeal and effort that I once held myself to.

I wonder how many leaders are like me, affected by the heat and pressure. I wonder how many of us feel broken, unable to break out of a cycle that continuously moves us away from the leaders we once desired to be.

The compromises leaders make look different for each of us. Perhaps you have lost your passion to encourage others. Maybe you have avoided tough conversations. You may have ignored, or are ignoring, the next looming challenge because you are too tired and weary from repeatedly reacting to adversity and crisis. Some are simply going through the motions, focusing on themselves, and no longer working to make a difference for others.

I have seen countless times where conversations to discern how to proactively respond to the next challenge are put off or ignored. This procrastination is a natural human response for people who have been through a lot, leaders who are tired, burnt out, and overwhelmed by the difficulties they have endured.

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Overflowing Plates: Leading Without Margin

I have seen how enduring challenging seasons can consume our margin. Many leaders' plates are full, too full to be able to focus on anything completely. We then end up doing a lot of things to a lower standard than we would like.

Many leaders today are like a Thanksgiving dinner plate. We all know that relative who fills their plate to the point that it is almost overflowing. The food is piled high. There is no space at the edge of the plate to add more food. When they go to start eating away at the pile, they are not quite sure where to start.

The problem with our plates being this full is we do not have any time to refresh, renew, dream, or take the time to reflect on whether we are truly living out our mission as leaders. We are not able to step back and evaluate if we are leading how we would like. Without this time of reflection, how will we know if we are burnt and bent from the heat and pressure?

We do not take the time or have the emotional capacity to discern if we are growing in the direction we would like to be growing. So we do our best to navigate our days amidst an overflowing plate, taking on more than we should and lowering our standards.

When driving through the burnt wasteland on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park, my thoughts eventually turn from realizing that I have been impacted by the heat and pressure to questioning how I can change. How can I get back on track? How can I recover? How can I prepare for adversity? How can I grow, and even thrive, through the next challenging season?

If you have the opportunity to visit Rocky Mountain National Park, amidst the scarred trees you will see lush new growth. Renewed life has sprouted and is taking root. There is hope for leaders to get back to being the leaders

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they desire to be. The good news is that God has left tangible examples of leaders in the Old and New Testaments that provide roadmaps for us.

There is hope for leaders to get back to being the leaders they desire to be.

The story of Nehemiah, and his leadership example, provides a tremendous roadmap to lead well through adversity. Nehemiah portrayed many leadership attributes that sustained him. He did not sway. He was not bent or broken from encountering a series of very challenging events. Nehemiah's example and the leadership attributes he showed provide a tangible and relevant blueprint of how we can get back on track as leaders.

The purpose of this book is to capture some of the leadership traits, habits, and attributes that Nehemiah displayed in a way that helps leaders be the leaders they desire to be, even amidst adversity. These attributes, habits, and actions will keep leaders thriving and more immune to heat and pressure that comes with the territory. They are attributes that, when lived and carried out daily, will help us succeed toward the reasons that motivated us to be leaders in the first place.

Nehemiah's Leadership Journey: Rebuilding Walls and Thriving through Adversity

The story of Nehemiah takes place after the Israelites have returned to Jerusalem. Their return came after a time in exile. The city's wall and its gates were burnt and in ruins, and they had been that way for almost one hundred years.[1]

The story begins when Nehemiah was serving King Artaxerxes as cup

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bearer. Visitors from Jerusalem came and shared the news that the wall was broken. The outlook in Jerusalem was bleak. It is clear from the start that Nehemiah's heart, care, and passion were with the people. During this time, Nehemiah wept, prayed to God, fasted, and mourned because of the news about Jerusalem. After taking initial time through prayer to find strength in his passion and calling, Nehemiah began his journey to lead the Israelites to rebuild the wall and realize the full potential that God had for them.

Nehemiah exhibited extraordinary courage when he made his request to King Artaxerxes to leave and help rebuild the wall, an act that could have resulted in significant repercussions. Because of Nehemiah's constant faithfulness and the wisdom God gave him, Artaxerxes granted him permission to go and help. Having the foresight to proactively prepare, Nehemiah immediately asked Artaxerxes for provisions and safe passage on his journey to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah, after arriving in Jerusalem, did not immediately turn to action or decisions. Instead, he first assessed the situation, showing tremendous humility. He took time to understand the reality of the situation before making decisions on how to move forward.

Only after taking time to humbly assess reality did Nehemiah cast a compelling yet simple and concise vision. Once the vision was cast, most of the people joined together in the work. The people displayed incredible organization and intentionality as they worked together to rebuild the wall.

Nehemiah anticipated adversity from the point when he asked King Artaxerxes for permission to go help. When challenges arose throughout the effort to rebuild the wall, Nehemiah met them with perseverance. His posture toward challenges is evident in his quick responses, willingness to listen and reevaluate, and rejection of the easy route. He was close enough to the work that he was able to respond

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proactively, intentionally, and in ways that motivated the people to persevere through difficulty.

All of this resulted in the wall being completed in just fifty-two days.

All of this resulted in the wall being completed in just fifty-two days. Fifty-two days! Less than two months, just more than seven weeks. Nehemiah stepped in and successfully led to help the people realize their God-given potential.

To do this, Nehemiah exhibited leadership attributes we can learn from to exude the intentionality with which Nehemiah led. He faced many challenges along the way. Chief among them were outside opposition, fear amongst the people, and complex logistical challenges.

Nehemiah was able to navigate and overcome the heat and pressure in a way that allowed him to lead well. He remained true to his passion, calling, and values. He overcame heat and pressure. His example provides an opportunity for us to once again thrive and flourish as leaders.

The lessons provided by Nehemiah's example can help ensure we stay true to ourselves as leaders. They will help us become the leaders we want to be. Perhaps we will even become leaders that are more equipped to also grow and flourish when faced with the heat and pressure that will inevitably come.

Leadership Lessons from Nehemiah: Eight Ancient Habits

This book is organized into eight leadership attributes that Nehemiah displayed. Each attribute is connected to specific verses within the book

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of Nehemiah. For lack of a better method, the chapters of this book are organized in the order that the lessons surfaced to me in the book of Nehemiah:

Chapter 2 – Passion & Calling – Nehemiah 1:1-11

Nehemiah was not only called to and passionate about the cause in Israel to rebuild the wall but was also driven to see the people step into the full potential God desired for them in Jerusalem.

We can learn the importance of keeping our own passions and calling, our purpose, central to why and how we lead daily. Nehemiah's leadership throughout the whole endeavor was anchored by his mission to see them realize their full potential.

Nehemiah's passion and calling was for him, and can be for us, the motivating force that makes it worth leading day in and day out. When we lead today, the importance of identifying, knowing, and keeping our passion and calling at the forefront can help sustain us, just like it did Nehemiah.

Chapter 3 – Courage – Nehemiah 2:1-3

Nehemiah showed that, even when we are fearful, we must stay the course we are called to by leveraging courage. Nehemiah, accustomed to exhibiting physical courage daily, began his leadership journey by showing enormous courage for his passion and calling. He continually led with courage, was willing to be vulnerable, and took personal risks that all contributed to the wall being rebuilt.

Courage helps us lead with integrity, and there are many opportunities for leaders to exhibit courage. We need courage to have tough conversations, to make tough or unpopular decisions, to move from reaction to proactivity, and to challenge the status quo.

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Chapter 4 – Wisdom & Discernment – Nehemiah 2:4-6

Perhaps one of the most evident threads throughout the book of Nehemiah is his habit to seek God's wisdom and guidance. Nehemiah continually, and in real time, sought wisdom through prayer and discernment.

Nehemiah shows that leaders who continually seek wisdom and who create habits for discernment to identify the best path forward in the moment will be more equipped to make decisions that help achieve the overall mission or goal.

As we face an incredible pace of work, challenges, and change, we need to intentionally develop the ability to grow our wisdom and discern the best path forward. Whether increasing our wisdom through trusted counselors or collaboration, leaders must work toward authentic discernment. Authenticity that results in an open-handed posture and creates a willingness to invite others into our discernment process.

Chapter 5 – Preparation – Nehemiah 2:7-10

Nehemiah was proactive, constantly preparing for what was ahead and what could stand in the way. When he saw potential roadblocks, he proactively worked to get in front of them.

Leaders often are overwhelmed and sometimes without the space or time to prepare. Nehemiah's example shows how creating capacity, both personal and organizational capacity, to prepare can lessen, and even prevent, potential challenges. Establishing rhythms for rest and renewal that help create our emotional capacity while setting boundaries can transform our ability to move from reactivity to proactivity.

Chapter 6 – Humility – Nehemiah 2:11-16

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Nehemiah did not jump right into rebuilding the wall. Instead, he sought the unfiltered truth of the reality the people were facing. This initial assessment is important evidence of the humility

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he possessed and exhibited throughout his entire leadership journey. He sought to humbly understand where things stood before assuming he knew how to move forward.

How many leaders today are humble enough and have enough time to take this assessment-first approach? Nehemiah's example shows the importance of leadership humility, of taking the time to assess reality before making decisions about how to move forward.

Chapter 7 – Vision – Nehemiah 2:17-18

Nehemiah cast his vision for rebuilding the wall only after thoughtful preparation and a humble assessment of reality. He first took the time to build trust. He earned authority and influence before communicating his desires to see the wall rebuilt.

Once he was ready to cast his vision, he did not just talk about the what of his vision for the future but also talked about what I call the first and second why. He communicated why it mattered to realize the vision and communicated why they could achieve it. Nehemiah's vision was connected to the reality the people were facing, and it was realistic. It encompassed the right amount of motivational force, and, at the same time, was achievable.

Chapter 8 – Action – Nehemiah 3:1-32

The amount of organization and efficiency needed to rebuild the wall was tremendous. It was clear that Nehemiah did not solely see his role as a leader ending with vision casting. Nehemiah took an active role in the implementation of the plan. His leadership foundation inspired engagement and participation by virtually all the Israelites. Everything he had done to the point of taking action contributed to the success of the people coming together in such a coordinated manner.

The action phase of any initiative or plan is typically where leaders fall short or fail; momentum fizzles because of weaknesses in execution

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and implementation. Nehemiah provides an excellent example of how to balance what is needed for effective action, how to overcome these pitfalls, and how to sustain focus so the vision becomes reality.

Chapter 9 – Perseverance – Nehemiah 2:19-20 & 4:1-6:13

Nehemiah expected adversity and challenges to arise; he planned for them from the outset. Difficulties, opposition, and challenges did not catch him off guard. Nehemiah's story contains a pattern of adversity encountered followed by immediate response. Nehemiah's posture toward and actions through adversity serve as a blueprint for leaders.

Nehemiah remained true to his passion, calling, and values in adversity. He responded right away because he expected challenges. He did not dismiss concerns raised by the people he was leading. He resisted the urge to minimize the potential impact of roadblocks. Nehemiah showed tremendous humility when he was willing to reevaluate how they were going about the work. He rejected the easy route, and he motivated the people as they navigated each challenge together.

While the book of Nehemiah has many other leadership lessons for us, these eight attributes are incredibly relevant to leaders who desire to thrive and ready themselves for the next challenging season.

Each attribute is not all or nothing. Leaders will exhibit these attributes to varying degrees: some strengths to build upon and some requiring extra attention. The good news is that leadership is a journey. The goal is to take small steps to grow into the leaders we desire to be. While you may feel bent, burnt, or broken, this book is designed to help you identify tangible ways to take these small steps. Small steps will result in large impact as you endure your next challenging season.

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Leadership is a journey. The goal is to take small steps to grow into the leaders we desire to be.

Each chapter unpacks Nehemiah's actions in the various leadership attributes, highlights relevant examples of how you can apply each lesson in your leadership, and provides suggestions to cultivate and display each attribute more fully.

If you want to apply lessons learned in a deeper and more personalized manner, a digital assessment complements this book. In the back of this book, I have included a QR code and links that will guide you to your complimentary assessment. The assessment will provide insights to help focus your efforts as you continue your leadership journey.

If we think back to the burnt forest in Rocky Mountain National Park, we can all probably, in some way, relate to the immense heat and pressure that took place, a type of heat and pressure that destroyed a thriving forest.

As we lead daily, we cannot ignore the impact that challenging seasons have had on each of us. The lessons that we can learn from Nehemiah will help us be the leaders we desire to be in new seasons that will remain challenging. They will help us once again thrive and flourish.

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The Nehemiah Blueprint Assessment

If you desire to apply lessons learned in a deeper and more personalized way, a digital assessment complements this book. The QR code below and link will guide you to your complimentary assessment. The assessment will provide insights to help focus your efforts as you continue your leadership journey and should take less than 8 minutes to complete. Once you have completed your assessment, you will receive a digital report designed to help you tailor your leadership journey so you can overcome challenges, return to purpose, and build lasting impact.



https://s.pointerpro.com/nehemiahblueprint

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Acknowledgements

God comes first, followed quickly by my family on the list of people I wish to express gratitude to. My wife Cynthia and our two boys were an incredible source of support and joy as I wrote this book. Without them, this book would not be in existence.

Many people supported me in writing this book. Christian Ophus, my publisher, provided much wisdom and guidance through a complex process. Janelle Keith provided early author coaching. My close friends and mentors, Mark, Mitch, Jess, Larry, and Art, read the book early on and provided transformational feedback.

Many other people helped to make this book what it is today, and several others also helped to refine the assessment. The list is certainly too vast to capture. You know who you are, and I am incredibly grateful for your support and encouragement along the way.

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Endnotes

Chapter 1: Heat and Pressure

1 *The NIV Student Bible, Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 510.

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A Roadmap to Overcome Challenges, Return to Purpose and Build Lasting Impact...

Most faith-focused leaders set out in their careers with great intentions to help others and courageously work to provide lasting solutions in a world in need. However, the challenges that today's leaders face have created an environment of immense pressure. Challenges that are almost unfathomable. Problems that seem borderline unsolvable. It seems inevitable that at some point, leaders feel burnt, bent, broken, and even uprooted as they endure an environment of constant adversity.

Although our modern-day problems may seem unique, we can look to history and discover that the answers may be right in front of us. One such example is the story of Nehemiah, found in the Old Testament of the Bible. A powerful story of insurmountable challenges, where one man took action and changed the course of history.

Nehemiah's leadership example provides a tremendous roadmap for today's leaders. The Nehemiah Blueprint unpacks 8 attributes that Nehemiah portrayed that fueled his leadership:

Passion & Calling | Courage | Wisdom & Discernment | Preparation
Humility | Vision | Action | Perseverance

If you're looking for a tangible roadmap to overcome challenges, return to purpose, and build lasting impact, The Nehemiah Blueprint provides a compelling case and relevant suggestions for you to lead well no matter what season you are in.

Chris Jorgensen



Chris Jorgensen is a dedicated advocate of nonprofit organizations, assisting leaders in maximizing their potential and making a lasting impact. With over seventeen years of expertise in nonprofit leadership, strategic planning, and financial oversight, Chris's passion lies in helping organizations build a strong foundation for success. As the founder of Convergent Strategy, Chris offers strategic guidance in planning, effectiveness, and organization development. Chris enjoys a fulfilling personal life with his wife Cynthia and their two sons, engaging in outdoor activities and supporting local causes.

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Tulsa, Oklahoma 74137
www.Emerge.pub

Author website:
www.convergentstrategy.com

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