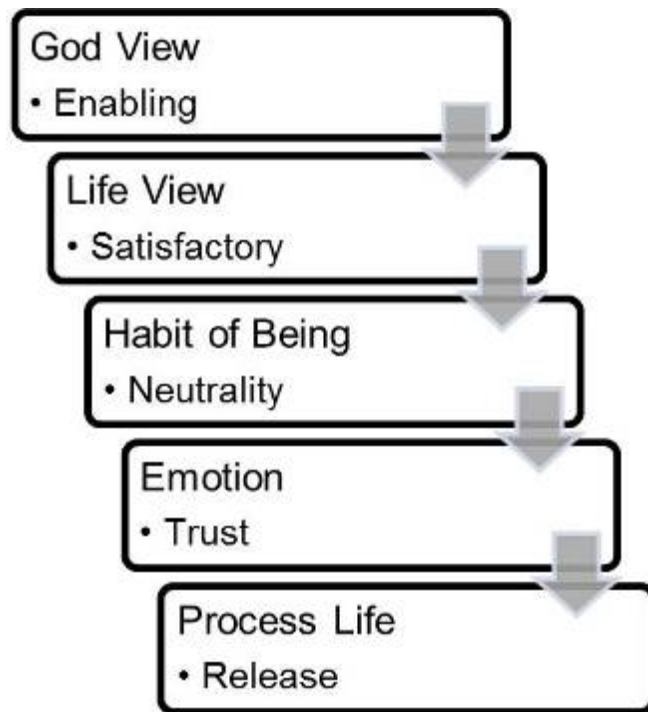


CHAPTER FIFTEEN – ENABLING - NEHEMIAH



Definition: Enable - To render capable or able for some task; "This skill will enable you to find a job on Wall Street"; "The rope enables you to secure yourself when you climb the mountain."

Note: We are not using the word "enable" in the co-dependent sense, but rather the traditional meaning to empower.

"When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: 'Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.'

But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: 'I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?' Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.

Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter in which was written:

'It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: There is a king in Judah! Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us confer together.'

I sent him this reply: 'Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.'

They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, 'Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.'

But I prayed, 'Now strengthen my hands.'"

Nehemiah 6:1-9

Nehemiah makes it easy for us. It's clear from his prayer, "Now strengthen my hands," that Nehemiah views God as one who will

enable him to take care of the needs and demands that come his way.

Despite how often Sanballat hurls his threats and twists the facts, Nehemiah remains unfazed by it all. There's a calmness with Nehemiah that I believe comes from his deep satisfaction with what God has revealed of Himself and how faithful He has been to all of His promises.

Life is not frustrating when you have the ability to meet its demands. For example, if we have a taste for a burger, you can reach into your pockets and find a \$20 bill. There's no frustration. There's no angst. We're pretty satisfied. We want a burger, and we have the means to purchase a burger. All is good. If, however, we want a burger and reach into our pockets and find \$0.35, we may experience a different set of emotions. Our level of satisfaction in life is tied to our deep sense of being able to meet its demands. Nehemiah does not complain that he shouldn't be in this situation. He doesn't go on and on about how things should or should not be. He has accepted the situation for what it is and prayed to his God to make a difference.

Though the odds seem to be stacked against him, Nehemiah is a model of trust. He neither runs, nor wallows in self-pity, nor charges God with neglect in the face of Sanballat's repeated assaults.

Nehemiah doesn't frantically scurry to make things happen. Like David recorded in the Psalms, Nehemiah has learned to "still and quiet his soul like a weaned child with its mother." He has released any preconditions he has on how life will be or how God must act. He is not tied to a particular outcome.

Of profound significance is the content of Nehemiah's prayer. He prays to his God to "now strengthen my hands."

Rather than pray that God changes the reality before him, Nehemiah prayed to be enabled, to be strengthened to successfully handle the reality in his life. Nehemiah is a great example to us of what it means to "lean in," rather than resist or avoid.

We often expend precious energy and indulge corrosive emotions wishing and hoping that reality was something other than it is. Acceptance is a powerful act Acceptance is what enables us to live in the moment. I'm reminded of the quote,

"It is not for us to know what lies dimly in the future, but to do what lies clearly at hand."

Thomas Carlyle

Nehemiah prayed for the strength to deal with what was clearly at hand. There's no discussion asking, "Why are there Sanballats in the world?" Nehemiah does not appear to be consumed with getting Sanballat to see things from his perspective, and that's what we mean by a habit of being of neutrality. Nehemiah does not need to polarize things. Life can go on quite satisfactorily without Sanballat ever agreeing with Nehemiah or coming to Nehemiah's view on things. Though this is beyond the scope of this book, this truth has profound implications for our relationships, whether they are friendships, marriages, parent-child, employer-employee, etc. There is a rich quality of life awaiting those who can maintain their

neutrality and not always have to convince others or give up their own values under the pressure of others. Neutral people are safe to be around.

Is there any wonder why Nehemiah was able to garner such widespread support from among the people? Because of Nehemiah's contentment and neutrality, people felt safe to be themselves around him. They were even inspired to be the best version of themselves.

They completed the construction of the wall in just 52 days.

Accepting the enabling attributes of God at a heart level is a real game-changer.