



|  |                                 |                                   |                         |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Series:</b><br>Nehemiah, Healthy Walls  | <b>Reference:</b><br>Nehemiah 3 | <b>Title:</b><br>Working Together | <b>Date:</b><br>5.14.17 |
| <b>Website Writeup:</b>  |                                 |                                   |                         |
| Churches die when people expect all ministry to be done by ‘the church’ or by ‘the clergy’. Ministry is a communal effort, where we serve organically & work together well realizing God has strategically place us in this place to finish the task of kingdom building. Therefore, churches thrive when everyone sees themselves as a contributing part of the church, and acts accordingly. |                                 |                                   |                         |

### Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

#### UPG Prayer of the Day...

Today we are praying for the 10 million Muslim Arab Hijazi of Saudi Arabia who have far less than 2% Christians among them. Arabia once had a large Christian population, but they were expelled when Islam gained control 1300 years ago. Saudi Arabs see themselves as preservers of the Islamic faith, and the Wahabi fundamentalists were formed there. The public practice of any religion other than Islam is forbidden, this includes the possession of any non-Islamic religious materials, so it's completely closed to Christian witness & therefore very difficult to reach these people.

#### Sermon...

We are studying Nehemiah, and today we enter chapter 3... where we find that there are two things you can't say as a Christian. The first, "You don't need me," and the second, "I don't need you." Chapter 3 of Nehemiah illustrates this for us, as do 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 & other passages. We're not fully dependent on others, yet also not independent of others. We're interdependent; we're the Church. In Nehemiah the same is true, all the people were involved in the project of rebuilding the walls, illustrating ministry isn't always so ethereal & spiritual. It's practical, involving every believer in the Church. If someone doesn't do the finances, set up & clean up, scheduling, organizing community Kingdom opportunities, etc., we don't run.

The practicalities of ministry...there are many people working to make Six:Eight operate both inside & out. For instance, externally Good Shepherd's given us a place to meet, community leaders have helped us as well. Church of the Saviour supported us for the first 6 months. In our beginning we had outside advisors. Internally, some of us lead community groups, or serve on the Pastoral Council. Jordan works hard at coordinating logistics; hospitality, greeters, assimilating newcomers, buying supplies, announcements, etc. Kim organizes our children's ministry, Rachel oversees prayer.

John Kulp oversees finances. Rob Granholm will be doing our books. The Nicoletti's run worship with a whole gaggle of people. Stef Austinat coordinates our Kingdom Opportunities. Many of you have served & are serving in ways too lengthy to list. And all of us, even without a specific task, just by showing up create the momentum we need to move forward. Even those of you visiting bring enthusiasm to the room today!

And, let's not forget about the simple & vital work that we do in encouraging, praying, discipling & studying with one another. There is just so much going on; at a quick glance we wouldn't realize that. People have served well here. We'll continue to do so in order to build the Kingdom of God into the lives of those in the Eastern Main Line.

Nehemiah's an image of a community of people doing the practical things of rebuilding the walls of the Temple; a very physical, but also emotional & spiritual act at the same time. In rebuilding walls, they're rebuilding identity.

Nehemiah 3 works on two levels. So, we'll take this chapter in two sermons. We will focus on the practical rebuilding today - next week we'll look at the gates as the means of access & egress into our lives - the ways people & God enter in, and the means by which we go out to God & others. So, as we look at the practicalities, we also want to think about what these gates in the Temple wall mean to us spiritually & emotionally.

Also realize, God records the obscure names of his people in the work they've done. Some small thing you've done in ministry might be told to others & God will use it as an encouragement to someone else you may never know. It's exciting to me that people are telling stories of my ministry in Lampung, Indonesia in Bryn Mawr, PA.... Let's read the passage in Nehemiah 3, follow along if you can, this will be a little tedious.

*1Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. 2 The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.*

*3The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. 4 Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. 5 The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.*

*6The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. 7 Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah—Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth—places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. 8 Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. 9 Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. 10 Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. 11 Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. 12 Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.*



*13The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate. 14The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.*

*15The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David. 16 Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.*

*17 Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. 18 Next to him, the repairs were made by their countrymen under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. 19 Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle. 20 Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib's house to the end of it.*

*22The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. 23 Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. 24 Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah's house to the angle and the corner, 25 and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh 26 and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. 27 Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.*

*28Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. 29 Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. 30 Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. 31 Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner; 32 and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.*

There are four things we can take from this passage today & continue next week to see what the gates mean to us.



Firstly, *Everyone Serves Organically*. The priests, Levites, rulers, gate keepers, guards, farmers, perfume makers, jewelers, pharmacists, merchants, temple servants, men, women, sons & daughters, fathers, etc. - some residents of Jerusalem, others from Jericho, Tekoa, Mizpah & other outlying villages - all volunteers just like we've done here! All involved in the ministry. We too all have the opportunity to be involved in the ministry here; everyone gets to play! 'Ministry' isn't left up to the pastor, but everyone. Churches die when people start to only rely on the pastor, or the organization, instead of Christ & the ministry to which we're all called.

What is, or will be, your ministry here? Firstly, it always needs to be *organic*. We all need to realize, just showing up, praying for each other, engaging in study & Kingdom Opportunities, studying, worshiping, confessing to one another, etc. all make up a large part of our organic ministry to the body. I was at a wedding & reception one day which you usually don't regard as ministry. But two things I would say, just to show up was an encouragement & memory built between me & others as a community. I saw one Six:Eighter dancing - I'd never known dancing was a way into her heart. But now I do, if I'd decided to stay home, that wouldn't have happened. But also, while there someone came up to me & in the course of a normal conversation this person started sharing some very deep & personal issues. I was able to encourage & pray over them - that wouldn't have happened if I'd stayed home. Likewise, I visited one of our community groups once & during the prayer time I received two simple visions from the Holy Spirit about two people in the room, both were shared & it prompted some good ministry over them. If I'd decided to stay home & watch *The Office*, yet again, that wouldn't have happened! Do we realize God can use us in any situation?

Ministry happens organically. We must engage looking for opportunities. Quality Time over Quantity Time is unrealistic. Rather Quantity Time creates Quality Time. I recently was invited to a group of people who rarely see each other. The person leading it was very intense & wanted to force us right away into a deep spiritual connection with each other - it just wouldn't happen, we had not spent enough time together. For instance, because I had spent 4 hours at a wedding reception watching this woman dance, now I know one more way to minister to her - I can go to her husband & say, "You're wife's stressed, let's go dancing!" And, the more we dance, the more she's apt to allow us into her heart & minister to her. There's no replacement for simple organic ministry to one another which involves time, fun, impromptu conversation, prayer & encouragement. Fun is important - so come to the picnic on June 10th, or the backpacking trip, anything else we put on the calendar, come early & leave late on Sundays! It's good ministry.

God also places specific ministries on our hearts. When he does, too often we take that idea to leadership & say, "You do it!," and when they don't, we get angry - but whose heart did God place it on? There have been times in my role as a pastor in which people have come to me saying, "God's really placing this thing on my heart, we should do it." After praying through it I agree & say, "Possibly, so take the ball & run with it!" But that's as far as it goes, since the person doesn't want to do the practical work of building ministry - they want the 'church' to do it, but who's the church? It's us, not clergy!



Nehemiah gets a vision, gets permission, is confirmed in his call, and takes the ball & runs with it - think about all the coordination & hard work it took to organize this! Likewise, he divvies out the tasks & almost everyone does their part. A picture of the Body working together! But, Nehemiah wasn't clergy.

In the past many of us have taken on tasks which lie outside our gifting, and we'll need to continue to do so - remember a perfume maker, or priest isn't a builder, but they did it! And over time, we'll also identify where God wants all of us to serve specifically - for instance, Lisa Woods & Lisa Jennings are awesome at coordinating events! But they've served in other capacities as well & may do so in the future, but we will see them used more & more in their gifting over time. Where will your ministry be? Be patient, do the work, engage - God will reveal it. Because I'm sure that as time went on, all the people fell into their various roles, priests did what priests do, farmers did what farmers do, but they still acted as the people of God ministering & caring for one another.

Secondly, let's realize that they *Worked Together*. It says over & over, 'next to him' or 'next to them'. Only one time does God break in this wonderful list of dedicated people to point out those that didn't want to serve, in v5 he says that the nobles of Tekoa would not serve under their supervisors. They wouldn't bend their pride apparently to work within the organized effort; in their nobility, they didn't want to serve under the authority God had established. If they'd been made supervisors they may've been happy, but it wasn't within the plan, and so God records their names too as shirkers of the responsibility. This is exactly the opposite of what we see here. Some of you hold very high positions at work, but you serve as anyone else at church! We may be king at work, but at church we're part of the crowd. You may be an expert surgeon, but God has a more humble place for us in the community of faith for a time. However, everyone else seems to have worked under Nehemiah's organizational structure by repairing the wall or gate which was assigned, and some even exceeded the work given them. They went above & beyond the call of duty. I've seen you guys do the same!

Notice too, the text mentions over & over these people working adjacent to where they lived - they served in their neighborhood/local community. Berekiah in v30 works opposite his living quarters - scholars believe he was a bachelor - that's Pete working to reach his neighbors! So, thirdly, God has *Strategically Placed* us where we're to serve to reach this community. In John 15 Jesus said to his disciples that he appointed them, and the word means '*strategically placed them*' - he had them in the place he wanted them. And, we see these people strategically placed, working right in their own community, as we've sought to do & are doing here. Do you realize God has you here for a reason? He believes in you more than you do, and is calling you to engage with ministry.

I think of all the stories you bring me of ministry to your neighbors. The community leaders who express how great they think we are because of how we've served them. The Linwood Park Board of Directors & their words of appreciation towards us. I think of Ardmore Initiative & how they call on us to help. I think of my neighbors who asked me to officiate at their daughters wedding, or the spiritual conversations I've had on my front porch with neighbors. We are doing it!



Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's hard work - giving up a night of the week to serve is sometimes hard. Giving up going to the shore to help PALM on a Saturday is not what we would first choose. Mowing the lawn of an old lady, or putting a screen door on the house of a single mother is not our first choice of a Sunday afternoon activity, but these things root themselves into the hearts of those we serve, other people watch & observe. More & more opportunities to share the Gospel come about as we dance with our neighbors & organically make relationship with them.

And, the fourth thing to be noticed is they *Completed The Task*. Responsibility, follow-through, commitment, sacrifice, these are the marks of spiritual maturity. When you can put your hand to the plowshare & finish the job. Running the race until you cross the finish line. When you can keep going even when it's hard painstaking work. In Hebrews 12 the writer urges us to *throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us*.

Jesus is our focus, and the model of self-sacrifice for others. When we do all this, we must put our Jesus glasses on, viewing everything through the filter of the Gospel - why do I do this? Jesus did it & commands it so that the Kingdom of God advances. Why do I love & care for people? Jesus does. We need only read the Beatitudes, or Philippians 2, to understand his heart for the world.

God's recording your name as you work. He's watching - pleased with your faithfulness; Hebrews 6 says God will not forget your work & the love you have shown him as you have helped his people. And, Jesus says in John 14, If you love me, you will obey what I command. There is a connection between our relationship with Jesus & what we choose to involve ourselves in; what we do. Which is balanced with Ephesians 2 telling us that is by grace we are saved, good works have nothing to do with obtaining our relationship to God. Yet, we're God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Saving grace has a profound effect in your life, witness, choices & direction - it becomes practical - will we listen & follow Jesus as it relates to others? God prepared these things in advance - he's strategically placed you here, we will be obedient? If we had the time, I would rewrite this passage to reflect our work here, Rob work next to Pete to reach their neighborhood. Tim & Mandy greet visitors at the door & make them feel welcome. Lindley & Mike built the Kingdom side by side with the Llobrera's in Ardmore. Kim & Belinda worked side by side with others to serve our children. All those in the community groups worked along with the community to build the kingdom, etc...

God calls us to ministry as a body together. The things we involve ourselves in are the practical outworking of our specific ministry here. Therefore, it's important for all of us to act as the Body as we've seen in Nehemiah:

- (1) Serve Organically; individually showing up, engaging, stepping up to the defined tasks given us.



- (2) Work Together without pride & at whatever God puts before us
- (3) Strategically placed reaching out to our community & neighbors where we are.
- (4) Finishing Our Tasks even when it's tough or tedious . To follow Jesus, to live as Jesus did, and to manifest Jesus to others; to work out our salvation with fear & trembling

### **Community Group Leader Questions:**

1. Are you a Noble of Tekoa or a Faithful Farmer? Maybe you are one or the other at different times in ministry & life?
2. How do you serve Christ in ministry? Do you realize that means serving people?
3. Discuss how we serve Christ by practicing discipleship, prayer, practical logistical care of others, building up people, etc. Share stories of how you've seen prayer work, or how you've witnessed the ministry towards others change lives.
4. Discuss how Six:Eight works together in community to reach our outside community.
5. Discuss how God has shown you that he's strategically placed you where you are for ministry. Are there people in your life he is calling you to minister to or to disciple more closely to Jesus? What are some practical things you can do to that end?
6. Have you missed opportunities? Do you look for opportunities to minister to & disciple others closer to Jesus? Or, do other things occupy your mind?
7. Is it overwhelming to try and 'finish the task'? And truthfully, when will our task be 'finished'? Can you commit to working towards the kingdom in faith that Christ will eventually return & restore all things?