

BUILD MY LIFE

"RISE UP AND BUILD"

NEHEMIAH 3:1-32

It was Nehemiah's vision, based on what God was doing and what still needed to be done, but he couldn't do it alone. When he learned that the Jews who had returned from exile were in trouble and living in disgrace, and that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates burned with fire (1:2-3), God put doing something about it in his heart (2:12). So after returning to Jerusalem to reconnoiter the situation, he gathered its citizens, the ones who would be doing the work, and challenged them, saying: "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.' I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me."

"They replied, 'Let us start rebuilding.' So they began this good work" (2:17-18).

God gave Nehemiah a vision that would take an entire community to make a reality. Nehemiah, then, infected Jerusalem's citizens with that vision, and when they caught it, they agreed to partner with him in its realization. In a nutshell, Nehemiah chose to partner with God in what God was doing, based on what he had said to Israel, and in turn, the Israelite returnees chose to partner with Nehemiah to make it happen. In the same way, we choose to partner with God and with one another, as ministers of the new covenant, to make God's vision for today a reality. Unfortunately, not everyone joined with others in the

Nehemiah skillfully divided the work force into some forty manageable work crews organized by common interest and geography.

– K. Tollefson

work then (3:5), and of course, there was opposition (4:1-3, 11-15)—and so it is today.

This Week's Core Competency

Biblical Community – I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

The rebuilding of the wall surrounding Jerusalem following the return of the exiles to Judea was a community effort. The vision was one man's, but the work was owned by all. The *upper* story of the book of Nehemiah is about the restoration of God's people, Israel, to their promised land and to obedience to the law after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. The *lower* story is about Nehemiah who partnered with God in what he was doing and those who in turn partnered with Nehemiah to make what God had put on his heart a reality. The *lower* story illustrates what God's people can accomplish when they work together in community with God's help, as well as providing a pattern for doing so.

One author writes: "A task so enormous as rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, especially under adverse conditions, called for unusual organizational effort. Several aspects of his delegation of the work are evident. He assigned everyone a specific place to work. This coordination stands out in the phrases 'next to him,' 'next to them,' 'next to that,' 'the next section,' 'beside him,' and 'beyond them,' which occur 28 times in this chapter. Assignments were made near people's houses (vv. 21, 23-24, 26, 28-30). Reasons for this plan are obvious. First, people who were assigned to sections of the wall near their homes would be more personally involved and consequently more highly motivated. Second, they would not have to travel to another part of the city to do the job, wasting valuable time. Third, in case of attack they

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would not be tempted to leave their posts, but would stay and protect their families. Fourth, the whole task would be a family effort, utilizing all available talent.

"Commuters also had a part. Men whose homes were outside of Jerusalem-in Jericho (v. 2), Tekoa (vv. 5, 27), Gibeon (v. 7), and Mizpah (v. 7)-were assigned to sections of the wall where there were few homes. Those workers were asked to complete tasks that would not be as conveniently handled by the permanent residents in Jerusalem.

"Assignments were also made by vocation. For example, the high priest and his fellow priests were assigned to rebuild the Sheep Gate (v. 1). This was of particular interest to them, because animals were brought through that gate to the temple for sacrifice. Other priests are mentioned in verse 22, 28. Other workers whose vocations are listed include goldsmith (vv. 8, 31-32), perfume-makers (v. 8), district and half-district rulers (vv. 9-12, 14-19), Levites (v. 17), and merchants (vv. 31-32). Even one man's daughters were involved" (Gene A. Getz, "Nehemiah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 678).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Nehemiah 3:1-32

1 Eliashib 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 Zakkur son of Imri built next to them.

3 The 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.

6 The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors with their 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.

13 The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. They also repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Dung Gate.

14 The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of

Rekab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place.

15 The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Kol-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 fellow Levites 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 of the wall. 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.

22 The 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.

28 Above 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 Shekaniah, 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.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline the names of the ten gates mentioned in vv. 1-32.
- * Circle the people groups, e.g., "men of Jericho," "temple servants," "residents of Zanoah," etc., mentioned in vv. 1-32.
- * Number the proper names of workers mentioned in vv. 1-32.

day **2** **EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. It seems appropriate that Eliashib and his follow *priests* should repair the Sheep Gate—the only "dedicated" gate. Explain why.

2. The *Fish Gate* was located in the *north* wall of the city. How convenient! How so?

3. What does the *contrast* in verse 5 indicate to you?

4. "Jedaiah made repairs *opposite* his house" (v. 10; cf., vv. 23, 28). How fortuitous! How so?

5. Note your *observations* on verse 12.

6. How could Hanun and the residents of Zanoah possibly repair a 1500-foot-long portion of the wall?

7. What *exactly* is being repaired in verses 15b-32?

8. Contrast the work done by the "men of Tekoa" (vv. 5a, 27) with that done by the nobles of Tekoa (v. 5b).

9. **Discussion:** Talk about the relevance of this historical account for today.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Nehemiah 3:1-32 reads like a genealogy or telephone directory-not very interesting. It does get more interesting, however, once you get beyond a cursory reading. Two strategies for reading the chapter surface in the literature. Readers either focus on the people or on the places mentioned in the text. Scholarly commentaries generally focus on topographical concerns and related matters, even though all agree it's impossible to identify many of the place names mentioned in the text. For example, opinions differ as to whether the wall enclosed the southwestern hill known as Mount Zion today, or only the original settlement-including the temple area-of the southeastern hill of Ophel. "According to the maximalist position, the circuit of wall would have been about two and a half miles, enclosing some 220 acres. According to the minimalist position, the circuit would have been just under two miles, enclosing about 90 acres" (Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 4:480).

In either case, the size of the task of rebuilding the city walls and gates cannot be overestimated. Ten gates are listed in the chapter: the Sheep Gate (v. 1); the Fish Gate (v. 3); the Jeshanah Gate (v. 6); the Valley Gate (v. 13); the Dung Gate (v. 14); the Fountain Gate (v. 15); the Water Gate (v. 26); the Horse Gate (v. 28); the East Gate (v. 29); and the Inspection Gate (v. 31). And a recently discovered 30-meter section of Nehemiah's reconstruction reveals a wall within the old city of David that is nearly 16 feet wide, built from very large, very heavy rough cut stones (see Eilat Mazar, "The Wall Nehemiah Built," *Biblical Archeology Review*, 35:2 March/April 2009).

Practically speaking, it makes more sense to focus on the people mentioned. One commentator writes: "This catalogue of largely forgotten names and places

reveals an extraordinary feat of organization and concerted action. It has all the marks of a shared enthusiasm, shown in the heterogeneous groups which set to work on their adjacent stretches of wall, some as family units, others by towns, carats (e.g. the goldsmiths, and the perfumer of verse 8), trades (the merchants: 31f.) and callings (the priests: 1, 21f., 28; Levites: 17f.; temple servants: 26; district officers: 9, 12, 15-17). One man has even mobilized his daughters (12; see comment). There is also a single jarring note (see on verse 5)-enough to highlight the extraordinary degree of unanimity achieved" (Derek Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, TOTC, 92).

The workers on the wall mentioned in chapter three display a remarkable "unity of intention" on the one hand, and "diversity of interest" on the other. On the first, the commentator who made this observation writes: "Some forty or more sections are mentioned in the list, most of them, we must suppose, working simultaneously. This, it should be remembered, includes extensive areas where a completely new line for the wall was being followed . . . without a common commitment to the specific task in hand, the result would have been a self-defeating chaos" (H. G. M. Williamson, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 16, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 211). And on the second, he writes: "We may note, for instance, that some participated on the basis of family association, others as individuals, some in district associations, some on the basis of their standing or position within the community, and yet others because of professional association. Moreover, it seems that Nehemiah allowed each group to be responsible, so far as possible, for the section of wall in which they had the greatest vested interest—because it protected their home, place of business, or the like" (212).

Nehemiah's account of the rebuilding of the walls

and gates of Jerusalem begins with repairs to the Sheep Gate on the northeast end of the city, described in verse 1, and ends where it began with repairs to the wall between the Inspection Gate and the Sheep Gate in the same location, described in verses 31-32. His description of the construction in between proceeds counter-clockwise from a description of repairs to the northern section of the wall (3:1-7), to the western section (vv. 8-13), to the southern section (v. 14), finally ending with the eastern section (vv. 15-32).

His description of repairs to the northern section suggests that in some instances people worked in places in which they had a vested interest. For example, priests repaired and dedicated the Sheep Gate used to bring sheep for sacrifice into the temple. And in other instances, not everyone chose to partner with the governor in the work. His

description of repairs to the western section indicates that guilds of craftsmen worked together. For example, goldsmiths banded together and perfume-makers banded together to repair adjacent sections of the wall. What's more, rulers of districts and half-districts (there were five districts in Judea) extended repairs to the wall—one with the help of his daughters. Remarkably, the residents of Zanoah repaired a 1500-foot-long section. His description of repairs to the southern section is short, limited to construction on the Dung Gate. His description of repairs to the eastern section is long, perhaps because here is where the wall suffered the most damage. A long list of individuals is mentioned in connection with work on the eastern wall, some like Zadok (v. 28) and Meshullam (v. 30) working in proximity to their homes.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

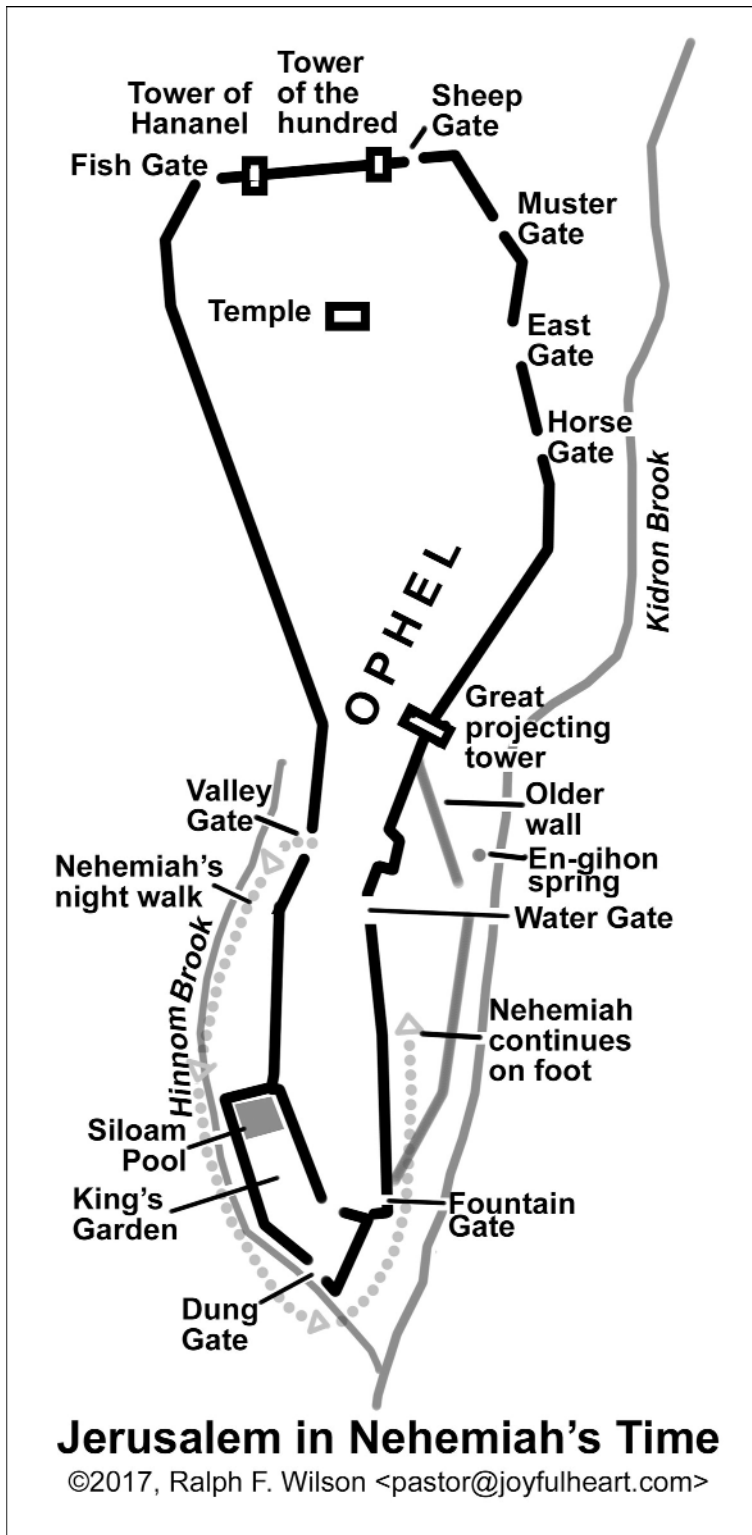
After God answers your prayer to prepare the way for you to partner with him, you should inspire others to join you in doing what you cannot do alone to make the vision he has given you a reality.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

Obedience to the Mosaic Covenant required rebuilding Jerusalem. List kinds of work obedience to the New Covenant requires.

List kinds of work required by obedience to the New Covenant in which you are engaged.

Identify your partners in that New Covenant ministry.



Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

By and large we learn our work ethic from our parents and grandparents. My parents owned a restaurant and did whatever it took to provide for the family. My husband's father worked for decades in a steel mill without complaining. During the depression, my grandfather filled out an application at Montgomery Ward every day until they finally hired him. He worked at the historic retailer for 39 years and I remember going to his retirement party. There's quite a bit of talk about how much we as parents do for the next generation and how they simply don't know how to work. Parents, work is not a four-letter word. Training our children from a young age to do chores and clean up after themselves is preparation for a life-time of employment. I remember a time when I was doing everything around the house while my kids played video games and relaxed. The mommy temper tantrum is significantly uglier than any two-year-old can throw down. I began to assign chores and tasks and hold the kids to a higher level of responsibility. My oldest son has a job this summer and his boss testifies to his hard work. Chores at home are worth it! This summer try implementing a chore chart or system of "work" around the house. Encourage your kids with ice cream or fun activities when the family completes their work. We are praying you train your children to work with all their hearts as working for the Lord (Col 3:23).

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Nehemiah 3

1. List the 10 gates mentioned through the passage.
2. What do you learn about where the people worked on the repairs?
3. What kind of jobs/professions did the people repairing the wall have? Name a few.

What Do You Think

This looks like a big list, but there is so much more in this chapter of Nehemiah. What stands out to you?

What R U Going To Do

Each of the people in Nehemiah worked on a specific area. This week, work on your area - clean your room, do your chores without complaining and honor the Lord with your work.

Core Comp

Biblical Community - I spend time with other Christians to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Psalm 105:1 – *Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you Belong, Become, and go Beyond as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.