

BUILD MY LIFE

"LIVING OUTSIDE OUR COMFORT ZONE"

NEHEMIAH 11:1-36

God is a God of order. His order includes initiation and provision. His initial creation was one of creating new spaces like the heavens and sky (Gen. 1:3-8), and the oceans and dry land (Gen. 1:9-10). The rest of his creative acts involved the creation of heavenly lights, vegetation and creatures to fill these newly created expanses (Gen. 1:11-26). In preparation for the flood of Noah, God instructed Noah to build an ark and then fill it with two of each living creature and provisions for these creatures who would populate and fill the new world after judgment (Gen. 6:11-22). Genesis chapters five and eleven show the lists of family populations before and after the flood.

Later, God sent the family of Jacob and just a few sons into Egypt (Gen. 46). The book of Genesis lists by name all the sons and grandsons of Jacob who entered into Egypt. This list also includes wives and daughters. This official list stands as a record of God's faithfulness to his covenant people. This relatively small family would grow immensely and would leave Egypt and fill the Promised Land with twelve full tribes of people. These people leaving Egypt would be listed by tribe and clan (Exod, 6:13-27). God's order not only creates and fills but also chronicles and substantiates with historical lists. The book of Numbers provides census numbers counting the people of God as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. The

There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.

– Isaac Newton

books of 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles each provide long lists of the people of God as they populate the nation under their kings.

The Bible's lists and genealogies speak to its historicity and authenticity. A mythology or fable would not be concerned with creating lists of human families and tribes. God's orderly nature includes a penchant for historical context and human generations.

It is no surprise, then, that when Nehemiah has completed the wall of Jerusalem, he would list out the people by family who would be occupying this new development in Israel's history. Nehemiah's list of Jerusalem's occupants stands in a long line of Jewish genealogy and list making. Nehemiah chapters 11 and 12 would also give testimony to the faithfulness of God to bring his people back into their land which he promised Abraham at the beginning (Gen. 12: 1-8). God's order includes great detail. He is to be praised for his provision and precision.

This Week's Core Competency

Peace – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and me.

God is not too busy to be bothered with the details of our lives. He is grand and ultimate, but this does not prevent him from knowing about and caring about even the smallest details in our lives. Jesus said that God cares about us to the point of knowing even the number of hairs on our heads (Matt. 10:29-31). In the past, God showed his care for his people in many ways, including genealogies and long lists of his chosen tribes. In the future, the Lamb's Book of Life will serve as confirmation

cont. pg. 2

of those entering into the blessings of God's preparations for eternity (Rev. 21:27). God's litany of biblical lists speaks of more than just his perfection. God cares about his people and he often preserves even the smallest details about us as proof of his care.

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

Nehemiah 11:1-36

1 Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem. The rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten of them to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. 2 The people commended all who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

3 These are the provincial leaders who settled in Jerusalem (now some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants and descendants of Solomon's servants lived in the towns of Judah, each on their own property in the various towns, 4 while other people from both Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem):

From the descendants of Judah:

Athaiah son of Uzziyah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, a descendant of Perez; 5 and Maaseiah son of Baruch, the son of Kol-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiyah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, a descendant of Shelah. 6 The descendants of Perez who lived in Jerusalem totaled 468 men of standing.

7 From the descendants of Benjamin:

Sallu son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiyah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiyah, 8 and his followers, Gabbai and Sallai—928 men. 9 Joel son of Zikri was their chief officer, and Judah son of Hassenuah was over the New Quarter of the city.

10 From the priests:

Jedaiah; the son of Joiarib; Jakin; 11 Seraiah son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the official in charge of the house of God, 12 and their associates, who carried on work for the temple—822 men; Adaiyah son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malkijah, 13 and his associates, who were heads of families—242 men; Amashsai son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, 14 and his

associates, who were men of standing—128. Their chief officer was Zabdiel son of Haggadolim.

15 From the Levites:

Shemaiah son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; 16 Shabbethai and Jozabad, two of the heads of the Levites, who had charge of the outside work of the house of God; 17 Mattaniah son of Mika, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the director who led in thanksgiving and prayer; Bakbukiah, second among his associates; and Abda son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. 18 The Levites in the holy city totaled 284.

19 The gatekeepers:

Akkub, Talmon and their associates, who kept watch at the gates—172 men.

20 The rest of the Israelites, with the priests and Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, each on their ancestral property.

21 The temple servants lived on the hill of Ophel, and Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of them.

22 The chief officer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mika. Uzzi was one of Asaph's descendants, who were the musicians responsible for the service of the house of God. 23 The musicians were under the king's orders, which regulated their daily activity.

24 Pethahiah son of Meshezabel, one of the descendants of Zerah son of Judah, was the king's agent in all affairs relating to the people.

25 As for the villages with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath Arba and its surrounding settlements, in Dibon and its settlements, in Jekabzeel and its villages, 26 in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth Pelet, 27 in Hazar Shual, in Beersheba and its settlements, 28 in Ziklag, in Mekonah and its settlements, 29 in En Rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, 30 Zanoah, Adullam and their villages, in Lachish and its fields, and in Azekah and its settlements. So they were living all the way from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

31 The descendants of the Benjamites from Geba lived in Mikmash, Aija, Bethel and its settlements, 32 in Anathoth, Nob and Ananiah, 33 in Hazor, Ramah and Gittaim, 34 in Hadid, Zeboim and Neballat, 35 in Lod and Ono, and in Ge Harashim.

36 Some of the divisions of the Levites of Judah settled in Benjamin.

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

Only in 11:1-4

*Underline all occurrences of "people" in this passage.

*Place a box around each occurrence of "Jerusalem" and any other phrases describing this city.

*Double underline all occurrences of "leaders" in this passage.

*Place brackets around each occurrence of "town(s)" in the passage.

*Draw a line to connect "rest" in Neh, 11:1 with "some" in Neh, 11:3.

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. What qualified a person to live in the newly rebuilt Jerusalem according to Neh. 11:1?
2. What was the *purpose* of casting lots? Why was this necessary (Neh. 11:1)?
3. How is the city identified and why is it called this (Neh. 11:1, 18)?
4. Who is Neh. 11:2 commending—leaders, lottery winners, or someone else? What is the purpose of this commendation?
5. Who is Neh. 11:3 describing?
6. Which broad groups are represented in the total of numbered returnees in Neh. 11:4-19?
7. What kind of men are mentioned in Neh. 11:6 and 11:14, and what might be their roles?

8. What was the role of the gatekeepers (Neh. 11:19)?

9. What king is being referenced in Neh. 11:23-24? What does this detail contribute to the understanding of the people occupying Jerusalem?

10. What is surprising about the list of villages in Neh. 11:25-36?

11. Why is it important for there to be a counted record of returnees to Jerusalem?

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

After Nehemiah completed the building of the wall in an amazing 52 days (Neh. 6:15), he then needed to fill the city with people to maintain it and protect it. A refortified city with no occupants would be like outfitting a new ship with no crew or passengers. The purpose of the wall was to protect people living and worshipping inside this city. Nehemiah's initial prayer was for not for the wall but for "the people of Israel" (Neh. 1:6). The list of people that Nehemiah generates in Nehemiah chapter 11 is not trivial. This list is an example of the comprehensive nature of Nehemiah, leaving no detail unattended. This attention to detail would serve the current and future generations of Israel well. These detailed records would also prove his accountability to the beneficent king of Persia as well as be his part of the record of his defense against those who would falsely charge him with corruption.

"It is not bureaucratic pedantry that has preserved these names. The point is, once more, that these people and their chronicler are conscious of their roots and of their structure as God's company. This is no rabble of refugees, settling down anywhere: they have the dignity of order and of known relationships; above all, of their calling to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex. 19:6). We learn from 1 Chronicles 9:3 (in a chapter

which fills out the present list with further names and with glimpses of the Temple servants at their work) that Israelites of other tribes than the three mentioned here took up residence in Jerusalem. But these three, Judah, Benjamin and Levi, were the nucleus. These had stayed with David's heirs, to form the kingdom of Judah when the rest had broken away; now the future of Israel lay with them and with those who had rallied to them from the other tribes" (Derek Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, TOTC, 117).

Nehemiah chapter 11 contains two lists. The first list lays out the occupants who would live inside the walls of Jerusalem. The second list identifies the surrounding villages that would support the city of Jerusalem and whose people would come to the city to worship in the temple. "Jerusalem is now ready for occupancy. With the sparse population, the resettlement could have followed right after the rebuilding of the wall (7:4-5). But the community needs the teaching and the understanding of God's word (8:1-10:39). With the understanding of God's word and will, the community is ready to move into another state for the stability and safeguarding of Jerusalem. People are encouraged to live in Jerusalem. There are two essential groupings in the resettlement. Those who are willing to live inside the holy city have their names recorded, together

with their ancestry (11:1-24). For others who prefer to live in their own ancestral home, the locations are recorded to show that God is faithful even to the returned community (11:25-36). Both settlements show the theme of faithfulness. The former indicates the faithfulness of the people, a group comprising a reliable and rising community. The latter confirms the faithfulness of God, bringing the people back to their ancestral homes as prophesied by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel" (Joseph Too Shao, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Asia Bible Commentary, 211).

Living in the newly fortified city would not be an easy assignment. Rather than being forced to move, people submitted to a lottery process that made the choice of ten percent of the people as new occupants. The people who moved to Jerusalem (both leaders and lottery winners) were commended by all (Neh. 11:2). "The fact that 'the people commended them' confirmed this positive attitude and suggests that this decision entailed some sacrifice. Most people preferred to live in the villages rather than inside Jerusalem. Moving to Jerusalem meant a change of environment, a change of neighbors, a change of friends for the children, and a change of life-style. But their loyalty to the purpose of maintaining the community made them willing to do it" (Mervin

Breneman, Ezra, *Nehemiah and Esther*, NAC, 255).

The list of cities (Neh. 11:25-36) identifies supportive villages that would surround the newly fortified city. "As a province of the Persian empire, the whole territory governed by Nehemiah was called Yehud (Judah), as was bounded on the north by the province of Samaria, and on the south by Idumea (Edom). But historically the part of it which ran from Jerusalem northward had belonged to Benjamin; so the two tribes occupied their representative territories, defined briefly in verses 30b, 31a, with Levi distributed among them both (36); also (as we learn from elsewhere, e.g. 1 Chron. 9:3) with certain survivors of the northern tribes. What is surprising at first sight is that this re-settlement goes beyond the confines of the new, small province, to include places that had belonged to Judah in the old days. Kiriath-arba (25), i.e. Hebron (Joshua 14:15), twenty miles south of Jerusalem, was almost certainly within Idumea, and there is no doubt about Beer-sheba (27), at twice the distance. But as citizens of the one empire, these people were free to settle where they would, provided they kept the peace; therefore what is shown here is a return of families to their native parts wherever possible, not an attempted expansion of the province" (Kidner, 120-121).

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

The Message of the Passage

Since God is faithful to his people, Israel, keeps his promises, and cares even about the most finite of details concerning them, we can trust him to likewise be concerned about us, his people, as well.

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

What does God want you to learn about him?

How does God want to change you?

How does God want to use you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **cast lots** "Lots were cast to select one out every ten persons to live in Jerusalem. From this we may deduce that circumstances were such that some were in effect forced to go to Jerusalem... The people regarded their selection by the sacred lot as the will of God, and were thus satisfied and glad to do his bidding... At the same time his [Nehemiah's] decision to execute it by the casting of the lot betrays his intimate knowledge of the religious convictions of his people. By casting the lot it is no longer Nehemiah who forces them to live in Jerusalem, but it is the will of God. So they could not bear a grudge against him" (F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT, 242-243)

v. 1 **holy city** "The title is preserved in the modern Arabic name for Jerusalem, "The Holy" (El-Quds). From the "holy of holies" of the temple, the place par excellence where God met man, it was believed that God's holiness spread to the whole temple, the whole temple mount, the whole city of which that mount was a part, and finally to the whole land, of which Jerusalem was the capital" (Raymond Bowman and Charles Gilkey, *Ezra and Nehemiah, Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, 3:771). Phrase also mentioned in 11:18.

v. 2 **volunteered** "Those who volunteered were either the ones chosen by lots who gladly moved to the city, or were additional men" (Gene Getz, "Nehemiah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 692).

v. 10 **priests** "Lists of this kind refer sometimes to families, not always naming (as 12:12ff. does) the current clan chief" (Kidner, 118).

v. 14 **able men** "'Able men' in this verse translates *gibbore hayil*, a stronger phrase than '*anse hayil*' (also translated 'able men') in verse 6. The phrase in verse 14 is usually used of military personnel. These may have been men trained for defending the temple area. It has been suggested that since the purpose for bringing these people to Jerusalem was the defense of the city, the list uses some military terminology and is organized in the traditional form of military lists" (Breneman, 257).

v. 19 **gatekeepers** "The duties of the gatekeeper families (more of whom are named in 12:25) are explained more fully in 1 Chronicles 9:17-27, where it appears that the security of the Temple area was their hereditary charge, and that their number was supplemented by non-resident kinsmen (hence, no doubt, the larger total in 1 Chron. 9:22) who came in from their villages for a week's duty at a time. The Temple needed a strong guard on account of both its treasures and its sacredness" (Kidner, 119-120).

v. 24 **king's agent** "Pethahiah appears to have been an adviser to the Persian king (Artaxerxes) in matters of Jewish affairs" (Thomas Constable, *Ezra*, www.soniclight.org, 54). This official agent would have shown the city's deference to the Persian king and would have quelled accusations against Nehemiah (6:5-7).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

I thought Nehemiah 11 was another "list" chapter, one that I would skim through trying to get to the next chapter. I reread it several times when the words flew off the Bible and smacked me in the face. This chapter is about being willing to serve God. Notice all the people willing to sacrifice their time, energy, and even home base for God. There were willing volunteers who sacrificed their whole way of life to relocate to repopulate Jerusalem. There were people willing to work inside (vv. 10-12) or outside (vv. 15-16) the temple. Some of the people willingly led by praying (v. 17) and others sang in service to God (v. 22). There was a need in the community and God's people willingly volunteered. Our church is blessed with a multitude of faithful volunteers each week. Some pray, others worship, several drive golf carts or volunteer on our medical team. The Children's Ministry alone operates with over 300 faithful, committed, intentional volunteers. Where are you serving the church? Are your kids interested in serving? There is a place for you! Engaging your family in the act of serving can be one of the most meaningful ways to connect to the church and create family memories that last a lifetime. Through the small act of serving together you grow closer as a family and the Lord. We are praying you open-handedly offer your family to be used by God to go beyond and minister to others in the church.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Nehemiah 11

1. How was it determined who would return to live in Jerusalem (v1)?
2. Who else decided to move to Jerusalem (v2)?
3. What volunteer jobs did the people have?

What Do You Think

What do you think of the agreement the Israelites made in verse 38?

What R U Going To Do

What commitment will you make to God this week? Write it down and post it somewhere you can see it every day.

Core Comp

Peace – I live without worry because things are good between God, myself, and others.

Memory Verse

Psalm 105:5 – *Remember the wonders He has done, His miracles, and the judgments He pronounced.*

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.

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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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