

Nehemiah 3: Building

The story of Nehemiah mirrors that of Jesus. Jesus, like Nehemiah, left what was comfortable to fix what was broken. Jesus, like Nehemiah, formed a team to bring about his purposes. Team Jesus is his church.

Jesus wants to fix what is broken in our lives. He wants to restore our love for his church (his bride!) and he wants to recommission us individually in his purpose.

Nehemiah 3 captures the diversity of Team Nehemiah. Men, women, old and young, skilled and unskilled, every stratum of society, those in full time ministry and those with normal jobs. What a picture of the church that Jesus is building!

But there's a unifying phrase that appears 20 times in this chapter: "Next to them..." they be brought together for purpose.

1. NECESSITY

They saw the necessity of throwing themselves in wholeheartedly. Eliashib the High Priest wasn't going to manage by himself. It needed everyone.

In acts 2:42 they used the word "fellowship" to describe that first church- the word means "participation".

2. IDENTITY

They discovered who they were by doing it together! People crave to know who they "really" are these days, struggling to define themselves. In v5 the Nobles of Tekoa tried to define themselves based on position/ background- and they TOTALLY missed God's plan for their lives. Compare that with 1 Cor 1:26 where Paul says "not many were of noble birth"- Our identity is found in Jesus and in community. Snowflakes are unique but have no purpose individually!

3. DIVERSITY.

The builders were different from one another, with different gifts and skills. 1 Cor 12 says God has given gifts "to each one". That means every believer has at least one special ministry gift from God to bless and serve others. Usually more. That means your positioning in life and in church is not accidental, but God's way of blessing and helping other people. What are my gifts? (If unsure use the example of Baruch in v20 who found a busy person and helped them out)

Who is God positioning me next to in church life?

Who is God positioning me next to in my everyday life?

The New Testament refers to God building us as living stones into his household. Nehemiah's enemies laughed at the stones he was trying to build with- they were damaged by fire- broken and unusable. But they were wrong. God uses the broken and damaged in remarkable ways to build his church and grow his Kingdom! Our brokenness and pain doesn't disqualify us from God using us. But in the midst of our sorrow we must continue to put our Hope in God who can help us through. Psalm 42 is a wonderful example of someone who continued to "Hope in God"

Questions:

1. Participation. In our new "post-covid" season- what do you think active participation in church community looks like (maybe look at Acts 2:42)? Has your view changed since before Covid?
2. Identity. How does community help define our personal identity? How does community save us from the pitfalls of cultural views of identity? Is this your experience?
3. Who has God positioned you next to? In church and in normal life? What does it look like to bless others and serve them with your God given gifts? How do we discover our gifts if we're unsure?

Psalm 42, arranged by Dan:

I long for you O Lord
For you the living God
And through the vale of tears
I will trust in You alone.

I think of days gone by
When I sang salvation's songs
Restore such joy to me Lord
Let me sing Your song again.

So why so downcast, O my soul, put your hope in Him
Why so restless, soul, He's your peace within
I will praise You for Your faithfulness
You're my Saviour and my God.

When I walk the lonely path
When I know the fiery trial
Your deep calls out to deep
You pour Your love all over me!

When our trials turn to gold
When we see You as You are
No pain, no tears or sorrow
My Jesus making all things new!