

This series, Out of Exile from Ezra and Nehemiah, continues as we see Israel freed from captivity in Babylon. Jeshua and Zerubbabel led the first and partial group back to Jerusalem to restore the Temple. The Temple for the Jews was very important to worship God. After the Temple was rebuilt, Ezra came to restore the worship in the Temple. He prayed and sought God's direction. Then Nehemiah had a burden and was sent to rebuild the walls of his hometown, Jerusalem. **Nehemiah 1:3** *And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and disgrace, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been burned with fire."* These people had been living in this destruction for a long time, without a wall and boundaries.

Boundaries are important in our lives as they create security, give structure and identity. Boundaries help to keep us safe and are important to help us occupy all that is given to us. In rebuilding the walls, Nehemiah was helping to rebuild Israel's identity.

5 keys to rebuild community:

**1. Acknowledge the problem. Nehemiah 2:17** *Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates have been burned by fire. Come, let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a disgrace."* Now for 160 years Jerusalem has been without walls, the people had lived in the rubble, and had ignored the problem. These people only knew this chaos and destruction. They never did anything about the destruction but were only providing a way through it. There are so many people who live like this today. What chaos have you grown up in? Community is not just the people around us, it's within the church, with God, in the families around us. To begin to have this in all places of our lives, start with acknowledging the problem.

**2. Be a part of the solution. Nehemiah 2:18** *And I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let's arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.* Did they become comfortable with this chaos because that's all they had known? Nehemiah asks them to look at the desolation. Then they began at once. Once they began the work, it took 52 days to complete! Complete - after 90 years of living that way. **Nehemiah 3:1** *Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and installed its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.* Eliashib had the highest authority and led the people in God's ways. The repair needed to begin with the leaders and at the place of sacrifice and worship. Eliashib did just that - led the building of the Sheep's Gate. The repair began at a place of prayer and sacrifice. These also sought God's Word first - David, Jeremiah, Jeshua, Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah. Change in our lives must begin with prayer and seeking God's Word. God will never be pleased with your work if He doesn't first possess your heart. All of us have influence somewhere - leading someone. Fathers, husbands, moms, wives, friends... Nehemiah gives clarity on what needed to be done.

**3. They worked together. Nehemiah 3:2-5** *And next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and installed its doors with its bolts and bars. Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana also made repairs...* The words "next to" are used many times in this chapter. So we learn that there is power in our unity as a body of ordinary people. The Bible records this work was completed in 52 days. If you

get involved, it will happen much faster than if you sit out. Can you imagine 90 years of chaos and yet it was completed in 52 days? Is that us? Living in a desolate place because of the monumental task in front of us? When God's people come together around something, God things happen. The key was in their unity not in their ability. Be careful who you unify with - it must be with God's people.

**4. Don't confuse gifting with calling. Nehemiah 3:1, 8** *Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate... Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.* God is looking for people who are faithful. Our calling is to serve. We sometimes use our gifting as excuses to sit out when God wants us ordinary people to do God's work and serve.

**5. Finish what you start. Nehemiah 3:32** *And between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs.* Rebuilding was not just about finishing their portion but about the work that God gave. Each completed their portion and kept working and supported others. Not quitting when our part is done, builds unity with those who are still working - coming alongside others. We all need each other in our work, in our community. No matter how big our chaos is, we can conquer together.

Some final thoughts...

- 4 times in Nehemiah 3 says that the people carried out the work in front of their homes. Ministry must begin in our homes. What we do in our own homes matters. Today is the day we take back our security, freedom, and identity. Community begins at looking at our own lives first. Don't ignore or wait.
- There were those who chose not to work. **Nehemiah 3:5** *Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.* There are those that allow pride to get in the way of God's purpose. It is important to come together.
- There was one dude, Baruch, who zealously repaired another section. He was the one defined like that. Are we marked as zealous?

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What is your favorite chaos? What have you done about it?

Where are you living with or without boundaries?

Have you been looking at a problem too long in your life? Waiting on another to take the first step? What problem is ready to address?

What broken unity between you and someone needs to be repaired?