

BUILDING 4 GENERATIONS TO COME

How Does God Build?

Nehemiah 3

INTRODUCTION: Last Sunday night our church made a decision that sets our course as a congregation for the future. We decided that we are going to become very intentional in our efforts to reach and disciple Millennials and Generation Z so that we can strengthen St. Andrew Baptist Church as a 4 Generation Church, now and until the Lord returns.

For me personally, the process of leading the church has been both an exhilarating and a humbling experience.

- Exhilarating in both seeing the Lord work in hearts and lives and hearing the testimonies of people hearing from the Lord concerning His desire for our church family.
- Exhilarating in seeing a large crowd gathered for our Church Conference to make the decision last week. (I admit, seeing the big crowd was a little bit scary as well!)
- Exhilarating in seeing the sea of hands rise in favor of the decision, all in one accord and without hesitation; no hands rising in opposition. The recommendations carried in a unanimous vote.

But the experience was personally humbling as well.

- The Lord put on my heart to begin to preach through Nehemiah as I tried to lead our church to make our decision.
- But I discovered that Nehemiah led the citizens of Jerusalem to make their decision in a single day to rebuild the wall of the city!
- It took me five weeks!

Nevertheless, by the grace of God, and with your great patience, the decision is made. Last Sunday night, we came to the same point as Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem after they made their decision to do what God wanted them to do.

Nehemiah 2:20 ... “The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, ...”

And they began to set their hearts and hands to the task.

Listen to the beginning of the description of how the people joined in the work to be done.

Nehemiah 3:1–4 1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, *and* consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel.

2 Next to *Eliashib* the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

3 Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs.

And so continues all of the rest of this chapter.

- Name after name
- Family after family
- This section of the wall
- The next section of the wall
- This broken gate being repaired and hung
- The next broken gate being repaired and hung

And so it is for the 32 verses of Nehemiah, chapter 3.

Many a worshipper would fall asleep in the service if the chapter were read in its entirety.

And in all honesty, many a pastor has found this to be a difficult chapter to preach. It is just so full of names of people we know nothing about and parts of a wall and its gates that are totally unfamiliar to us.

You remember, I told you a few weeks ago, that when God gives a lot of detail about something in His Word, it is always purposeful. God does not do anything without reason. So what is His reason here?

I believe the reason for God letting us see the detail of the rebuilding of each and every part of the wall and each one of its gates is for us to see some important truths that relate to the whole.

I remember my wife's wedding dress which her mother made. Karen's mom sewed more than a thousand individual tiny pearls on Karen's dress and train. I would come home from college to see Karen over the weekend. I would go into her house

and Mama Bourns would show me her red, sore, finger tips and tell me how many dozens of pearls she had sewn on the wedding dress that week.

But on the day Karen walked down the aisle, it wasn't any single pearl that was the focus. All of them together made for an absolutely beautiful dress, but even the dress wasn't the focus. No the focus was Karen herself, the gorgeous bride walking down the aisle.

Folks, in this passage the Holy Spirit is showing us how we can be a part of Christ's building the church to make her His glorious bride.

When we do read through the entirety of the passage, we see several things of importance about the way God builds.

I. GOD BUILDS BY CALLING MANY TO JOIN THE WORK.

A. God gives us a clear picture of the way He works in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem.

- **The High Priest and the other priests were the first ones listed to join the work.**
- Now I am not the High Priest. That is Jesus.
- The staff and I are priests, but no more so than every one of you who has trusted the Jesus as Lord and Savior. In the Revelation, John said,

Revelation 1:6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

- But I think the point of these men being listed as working on the wall was to say the spiritual leaders of Jerusalem worked right alongside everybody else. And that is my promise and the promise of your staff. **The work God has given to our church** is not just something we are asking you to do. Neither is it something that God has just given us to do. It **is something for us to do together**. We have been and we shall continue to be in the heart of the work God has given our church!
- Notice others mentioned in joining the work.
- **The men of Jericho are listed.** Jericho is 15 miles away. These guys did not even live in Jerusalem. It was not convenient for them. They received no personal, practical benefit. Their homes, their families were no better protected after the wall in Jerusalem was built than while it remained in ruins. But they saw a work God had for His people, and they joined in that work!
- This week a couple from Michigan emailed me and asked for a copy of the recommendations we adopted. They said they always come to our church when they are in the area, they stream our services when they are back

- home, and they just have a love and interest in our church. I am confident that they will join us in our work by prayer if not also in other ways.
- Verse 12 says that **Shallum and his daughters made repairs**. Now many other places fathers, brothers, and sons are mentioned. Perhaps Shallum did not have any sons. But that was no excuse. He said, girls, we can take a section. I will lift the stones and you can work the trowels. The girls all said, "Great!" Then the oldest said, "Daddy, what's a trowel?"
 - Verse 17 says **the Levites made repairs. The Levites here are the musicians who led in the temple worship**. Folks, I will tell you, my hat is off to all the musicians in our church family who lead us in worship so faithfully week after week. I am grateful for our wonderful choir, those in our Praise Team, our soloists, our instrumentalists – all of them. If you have been a part of the conversation about what is going to take to reach more Millennials and Generation Z so that we can disciple them, then you know that the biggest adjustments have to be made by these gifted people who use their talent and ability unselfishly to help us worship the Lord.
 - I'm not going to pretend that none of them had questions or concerns about what the changes were going to mean, but folks, listen. There are musicians in a lot of churches who have great musical ability but not great spiritual maturity that when the preacher stood before them to talk about the way they were going to have to change their music, they would have thrown a hissy fit and told the preacher how to catch the next bus out of town.
 - Folks if I ever even had a single musical talent, then surely I buried it somewhere and lost the map. Yet these gifted, trained, disciplined musicians listened respectfully to me try to explain and responded with grace. And leading the charge to say, "We will do whatever God empowers us to do" is Bro. Doug, and Jim Colvin, our orchestra director.

B. God built our first church in Tulsa by calling many to join the work.

Last week I told you how at the first church I pastored, Karen and I learned a lot about how to keep our eye on the prize and trust the Lord as we tried to walk in obedience with Him.

After the Lord helped us reach a good group of children and we were starting to gain some young families, we decided it was time to get the whole church engaged in reaching out to our community. The tool God put on our heart was Vacation Bible School.

One Sunday morning, I introduced the idea to the whole congregation. I said, folks, we're going to do a Vacation Bible School like you have never done it before.

- See, like every Baptist church in the world, they had always done Vacation Bible School. During the summer, a dozen ladies would prepare crafts, Bible lessons, and cookies and kool-aid. And they would have VBS classes for about 25 or 30 children for a couple of hours in the morning for a week, and that was Vacation Bible School.
- Our church, Skelly Drive Baptist had done it like that forever.
- I told the church, we're going to do VBS different. God wants us to fill this building with children, teens, and their parents. We are not going to have dozens; we are going to have hundreds.
- My people just kind of looked at one another, silently questioning my sanity.
- With the next statement, I removed all question. I said, "We are going to have VBS at night! The kids are more available. The parents are available. And the men as well as the ladies will all be available to work in VBS." The jaws of every grown man in the church fell to the floor.
- I said, "In a few weeks, we are going to sign up for where we want to work in VBS every night for a week. We need everybody who is healthy enough to attend church to work in some way in Vacation Bible School." You could hear a pin drop.
- But folks, God moved in our little congregation, and men and women alike signed up. We planned out children's classes and youth classes for every one of our rooms in the church except the Worship Center which we reserved for an adult class.
- We printed flyers, and our youth would go to all the neighborhoods around the church delivering flyers and inviting people after school and on Saturdays.
- You know those things called bounce houses? Well we are talking in the days when those had only recently been developed and they were very rare. There was not one in the whole city of Tulsa, Oklahoma. So I personally went to my bank and borrowed the money to buy one so we could use it in VBS to attract children. I promised the bank I would rent it out so I could make the payments on it. I asked an insurance man in the church to get me some insurance on the thing in case somebody got hurt. He had to get the insurance through Lloyds of London.
- The bounce house, it was called a Jupiter Jump, was shipped to me. We took it and set up in yards all around the church and let the kids bounce free. Then we gave them a flyer and said they could bounce every night at VBS at Skelly Drive.

- The week before Bible School, I took a group of men with me to Ok. City to a church who was loaning us three circus tents. We brought them back and the men of the church set them up on the lawn in front of the church, and we put up a big sign that said Vacation Bible School with the dates and times right by the tent.
- By the time VBS was set to open, we had about 85% of our regular attenders working in some capacity at VBS. The afternoon before VBS started, Karen and I started getting jumpy. We had over 100 workers ready to go, and we looked at each other and said, "I sure hope we have the kids." So we prayed and prayed and just asked God to bless the faith and the commitment of His people and to just flood us with children and teens and parents.
- And He did. OH, my. He did! In our little church, then running around 200 on a good Sunday, we registered nearly 700 in Vacation Bible School! We packed our church plant out. We filled up those tents at the closing assembly, and we had a glorious Vacation Bible School, and saw a good number of older children and teens come to the Lord.
- Because God called His people to join the work.

C. God is calling many, many people at St. Andrew Baptist Church to join the work He is doing among us and through us.

- I cannot begin to name all the places God has for people to work, places not yet filled by others.
- But I can give you some samples.
- We need volunteers at our Center of Hope. If you could help any weekday morning or on Thursday night, we can train you and God will put you to work. You just contact Bro. Thomas Gamble. His contact information is in your worship folder.
- Bro. Jeremy Johnson is working to strengthen our greeter ministry. He needs people who will smile, and be friendly, and talk with people. He needs faithful people who will see that this is the Lord's work, greeting guests to make them feel at home and helping them find the right place, helping them get their children to the right place. He needs a lot of people. His contact info is in the folder also.
- There is hardly any ministry or mission effort that we have as a church where there is not a need for more people to help with the work.

CONCLUSION: This is the way God builds His church. He begins by calling many to join in the work. Have you found your place in God's work here at St. Andrew? There is a place for you, and I and the staff, and many of our other leaders will help you find it.

In a moment when we pray, would you first pray about your place of work in the Kingdom of God?

- If you have found it, pray for it; dedicate yourself to the work God has given you.
- If you have not found it, ask God to help you find it. Purpose to get some help from one of the staff or another leader here at St. Andrew to find a place where you can faithfully work in building the kingdom.
- If you have not yet come into the kingdom of God through faith in Christ, know that He wants you to be a part. There is a place for you. Jesus died to forgive you and cleanse you to make you a part of the forever family and kingdom of God. You can come into that family by trusting in Him.