

Responding to God's Call to Rebuild and Restore

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[0 : 00] Well, welcome everyone. Welcome to the new series on Nehemiah's principles for life. Over the coming weeks, we're going to examine our principles for life lived out in the life of Nehemiah through prayer, faithfulness, opposition, leadership, and that word commitment.

The Nehemiah story comes at a point when rebuilding and restoring needs to take place. Following God's plans, it's seemingly taken a bit of a backseat in Nehemiah's time, and in order for God's people to thrive, to grow, and to prosper, this needs to take place in the lives of the people that Nehemiah is called to serve.

The main events of this book take place in the spring and summer of BC 445. And when we meet Nehemiah, he is a cupbearer for the Persian kings.

Now, this job was to taste the wine of, and if it's poisoned, then that's it. He will be the first to know. I'd love to read the job specification for the role.

Well, it must have been fairly interesting and quite bold to take on, really. Nehemiah was a Jew and, in theory, a slave to the kings, yet his position was significant within the court, and he was well respected.

[1 : 37] You see, at the outset, we get this picture of his character. Nehemiah was solid, dependable, he was committed, and yet he receives a visit from his brother, his brother called Hanani, who tells him that the gates and walls of the holy city of Jerusalem are in ruins.

The temple is still standing, but the decline in the people's morale, their spirituality, and general apathy about God left the city vulnerable, and Jerusalem, the city of God, its people and its building, its wall, was in a sorry state.

In the principles for life that we're about to look at, God calls us, and God called Nehemiah to the vulnerable.

Defend the cause of the weak and the fatherless, maintain the rights of the poor and the oppressed, it says in Deuteronomy 10.18. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.

Jesus identified with that. We meet him in those who are in need, for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.

[3 : 03] I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. It's a Jesus principle.

Jesus said it again and again. God touches the heart and the life of Nehemiah and us through this series. What needs to be rebuilt?

Well, what is God asking of us all in this time? At the end, as we come to maybe the end of these long, long 15 months, as you will see in the story of Nehemiah and the principles for life, that everybody, everybody came together to rebuild.

It's a message that flies off the page of Scripture and into our hearts. And over these past months, the needs of some areas of this community have increased. And like Nehemiah, there has been a call to step in and step up to that call.

And maybe even more at this time as we move towards the 21st of June, that magic date. There are many that you will know, but one area particularly is child hunger.

[4 : 22] Here amongst us and amongst other agencies, our own TLG, Transforming Lives for Good, Make Lunch team have brought boxes of hope for children.

Led by Helen and others in the team, they have been active. And this month, TLG nationally has recorded, not celebrated, because we all wish that this injustice of child hunger didn't exist, but it did.

One million meals have been provided by TLG volunteers across this country through boxes of hope. Please watch the clip at the beginning of this sermon.

One brick at a time rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. As we heard in the story of Nehemiah, one meal at a time rebuilds a child's life.

One prayer at a time allows us to listen to God's call on our lives and act in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's the exciting bit about this series.

[5 : 30] You know, Nehemiah had to decide, and we all have to decide. He had to decide. Do I stay in this comfortable palace with status, security and favour of my employers?

Or do I obey God's call? Whatever that might be. And it was certainly very, very stark for Nehemiah to make a difference to the situation that God has shown him and called him into.

You may have had that call in your life. You may know that, what that actually means when that challenge of God's call comes to you and that opportunity is placed in front of you.

As we followed this series, you will see through how Nehemiah responded. How he wept over the city and its moral decline. And his heart for the people.

How he responded to God's call. How he motivated and engaged the people of God to trust in the Lord and rebuild not only their city, but their lives and their community.

[6 : 35] To value the presence of God amongst them. To restore the values of what it means to be faithful and committed followers of God. You know, frankly, to motivate them to do what God was asking of them.

And to restore not only the city, but the lives of the people of God. You know, that's such an exciting call of God. But seems mammoth to us, doesn't it?

How maybe as we look at our community, how can we serve? How can we reach out into our community in the ways that God is calling us to do that?

To be a beacon to others in a selfless and prayerful action as we rebuild. Not just the walls, but as Nehemiah did.

That he restored the confidence of God that had been placed in those people. And they responded. This series will ask a lot of each and every one of us.

[7 : 41] What are the main principles in my discipleship with Jesus? No matter what age I am, where I am, what am I prepared to do?

Where do I resist? Where have I resisted to follow? What excuses of our need? It's a big call that he has asked of Nehemiah, yet he responds.

And as we embark on this series, we start by asking, where do the walls of our culture need rebuilding?

What are you calling me, Lord, to make a difference in what I do and what I say, how I respond? To the morals, to the values, to the disciplines, to prayer, to Bible study, to my joy in sharing, my generosity.

The list goes on and on and on. Serving may be, as we do with different groups. Maybe offering to do things that might seem unrelated, but are so important to rebuilding, like admin, giving lifts to others again as they come to church.

[8 : 48] Offering to provide hospitality, to serve tea and coffee. Maybe as a home group, offering once a month to serve others on a regular basis. You know, do I communicate to the life of my church and community, my family, by willingly, as Nehemiah did, willingly increasing that which I can give, both in my time and maybe in my giving as well, to the community that God calls me to, and the community that I guess we have a heart for.

I hope we do. I'm sure we do. Otherwise, we wouldn't have been called here. Nehemiah, as you will discover, is a good news story.

A very good news story. And if you don't like spoilers, if you, and many people don't, if you don't like spoilers, then I want you to know the end before we've even begun.

But I won't give that spoiler to you now. I'm giving you the opportunity now to press mute if you don't want to know how this ends, or even just put your fingers in your ears if you like.

Here it comes. The story ends that the people came together. They came together, everyone.

[10 : 15] They grafted, they gave sacrificially, they gave spiritually, and grew together. They grew together in a people of God. They were one once again, bonded together in a common purpose, in their love and service to the Lord and to each other.

They worshipped, they lived, they gave, they shared. And this mammoth project, this mammoth project of rebuilding the walls that had happened over so many years, happened within 10 years? Five? No. Five? Not even five. The whole city was rebuilt in 52 days.

52 days. Probably about the time of this sermon series. Shall we rebuild together?

Will we come together, listen to God's call on our lives as a gathered church, and hear what he is saying to us at this crucial time of rebuilding?

[11 : 29] I really hope you enjoy this series. Let's pray together. Let's pray. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Holy Spirit, would you come? Come amongst us as each one of us responds to your call to rebuild. Engage us afresh, Lord, in the following days.

And may we live and lift you high in every part of our lives and build like the kingdom is near. In the blessing of God, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you as we respond to his calling individually and together.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.