

BUILD-A-BELIEVER WORKSHOPS

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People say to me, "How do you build a church?" You don't build a church, you build a believer. As a result, the church will build itself. (John MacArthur).

Nehemiah

Chapter 3:1-5

"Bend It Like Builders"

Nehemiah 3:1 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.

Nehemiah 3:2 Next to *Eliashib* the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

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

Nehemiah 3:4 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.

Nehemiah 3:5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

Introduction

A cupbearer; a few priests; goldsmiths; perfumers; several government officials; and some merchants. *Not a contractor among them!* Yet they accomplished in 52-days what others before them had failed to accomplish in nearly one hundred years. They rebuilt and repaired the wall and the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

Look around you. Like the Jews in Jerusalem, our fellowship is comprised of ordinary folks from all walks of life, from every profession. But we, too, are involved in a building project. It's a spiritual building project of being built together as the Church of Jesus Christ on earth in order to further the Gospel.

When you see it like that, you get a little more excited about reading chapter three. Maybe there are some principles, some insights, that

we can apply that will help us to have success as we put our hearts and hands into the work of serving the Lord.

Reading and re-reading chapter three yields at least three observations:

1. The first thing you observe is that, when they began to build, they **consecrated** the work. It means they *dedicated* the work to God.
2. The second thing you observe is that some of the work on the wall required skilled labor. The phrase, **hung its doors with its bolts and bars** is repeated five times.
3. The third thing you observe is that many of the workers built and repaired sections that adjoined their own homes. The phrase, **each in front of his own house** (or something similar) repeats about four times.

Each of these observations are like breadcrumbs left on a trail that invite us to follow them in the right direction. Though they overlap each other throughout the chapter, they are emphasized in clumps of verses. I want to look at each of them separately and, so, we will take three studies to get through chapter three.

They began building at the **Sheep Gate**. But that's just the physical beginning. They first made a spiritual beginning. Twice in these opening five verses you're told they **consecrated it**. It means that they began building by dedicating the work in a ceremony, probably with a sacrifice.

You also see a negative in these opening verses. As repairs continued, certain of the nobles, in verse five, **did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord**. **Shoulders** is a poor translation. It should read, *they did not bend their necks*. "Bending your neck" was a phrase that meant you submitted to someone who was over you.

From these notes we can say two things about our own spiritual work of building for the Lord: #1 Building Begins When You Bend Your Neck, and #2 Repairs Advance When You Bend Your Neck.

#1 Building Begins When You
Bend Your Neck
(v1-3)

The Jews **consecrated** the project. They dedicated the entire project to the Lord. We can only speculate as to the actual ceremony. Regardless the particulars of the ceremony, it was intended to acknowledge that He was the One overseeing it. They were doing it for Him and would do it as unto Him.

To use their phrase, we would say that they began building by **bending their necks** to God.

All the building you want to do for God begins by bending your neck in submission to Him:

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*
1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

We submit to both God's will for building and to His ways for accomplishing it.

God's will can be seen represented by the two gates in these verses – the **Sheep Gate** and the **Fish Gate**.

The **Sheep Gate** was so called because this is the way through which the sacrificial lambs were brought to the Temple.

You cannot help but immediately think of Jesus, Whom John the Baptist introduced as **the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world**. Bending your neck begins by submitting to God's Son as your Savior from sin.

If we're going to begin, let's begin at the beginning. You must become a new creation in Jesus Christ. Old things then pass away; all things become new.

The other gate mentioned here is the [Fish Gate](#). It doesn't take much imagination to determine why it was so-called. Through this gate the fishermen brought the day's catch.

As He called them, Jesus told His first disciples that they would be His [fishers of men](#) (Matthew 4:19). Just before He left them, He gave them (and us) the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples of all men.

We desire to see others bring their lives into blessed submission to Jesus. Everyone serves someone; no one is free. If you do not serve Jesus, you are a servant to sin and self. Only in bending to the Lord are we truly everything we were meant to be and become.

That, then, is the will of the Lord – that we be saved by the blood of the Lamb and that we let others know that God is not willing they should perish. Whenever you begin to build something; whenever you embark on serving the Lord; these two principles must be in focus.

Something of the Lord's ways are also revealed here.

[Nehemiah 3:1](#) 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.- *being changed to bring change* -

The [priests](#) were builders. They had other duties – like leading the consecration service. But they, too, must share in the work.

The [priests](#) were builders. Today we would say the builders **are priests!** Twice in his first letter, the apostle Peter reminds you that we are a priesthood of believers; and that each of us is a priest. In fact, he does it in the same verse in which he reminds us that we are God's spiritual building project:

[1 Peter 2:5](#) you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

You may have other duties – little things, like your job. But you, too, must share in the work of the ministry. Bend your neck gracefully to the fact God wants to use you to do the work of the ministry.

The towers mentioned were watchtowers where soldiers barracked. You are reminded that ours is a work that will involve warfare. We'll see, in chapter four, that they held a trowel in one hand and a weapon in the other. When you build for the Lord, both you and the work will come under attack.

Nehemiah 3:2 Next to *Eliashib* the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

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

Jericho is an interesting city to mention here at the outset. Many years earlier, it was at Jericho that the conquest of the Promised Land began. Jericho's walls came tumblin' down! Jerusalem's wall was going up.

When we are submitted to God, our enemies tumble and fall before us while we remain safe in His care and keeping.

Some fathers are mentioned by name; some sons are mentioned by name. It's a reminder that God wants to extend His grace to every generation. If we will humble ourselves, bend before Him, we begin building for the future as our sons and daughters receive Christ and learn to serve Him.

It's one thing to begin well. It's another to advance.

#2 Repairs Advance When You Bend Your Neck (v4-5)

Although the word "built" is used again in this chapter, the word **repairs** or **repaired** dominates – used some thirty-five times. It has the idea of strengthening something already established. We get from it the idea of advancing in the building project after it has begun.

Verse four gives you a sense that they were really making progress:

Nehemiah 3:4 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.

There was Meremoth working feverishly; there was Meshullam keeping pace; there was Zadok pulling out all the stops. These guys were excited and zealous. They were going for it.

So were the guys next to them – the Tekoites. But there was also a bummer:

Nehemiah 3:5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

We're not told why the noblemen of that region refused to submit and work. I'm sure it was for all the usual reasons you can think of. Here are two common reasons folks are slackers:

1. Maybe they thought the work beneath them. Some people think their skill, or their status, need to be taken into account. They won't do what needs to be done – only what they want to do. Jesus Christ reduces us all to servants; **then He elevates serving!** Was it beneath our Lord to wash His disciple's feet? In one sense, yes; but in another sense it should have been expected.
2. Maybe the **noblemen** thought they had a better plan than Nehemiah. People chaff at certain procedures – not agreeing with them, not willing to submit to them. As a believer, I am bent to God's plans for my life – **not my own!** My plans would never involve the suffering and sacrifice that are molding and shaping me into the image of Jesus.

We all begin the Christian life bent before God – in submission to Him as our Savior. Then we begin building toward our meeting with Jesus in Heaven. It's even described as if we were building something. In First Corinthians chapter three, the apostle Paul describes how we can build with either **gold, silver, and precious stones**; or with **wood, hay, and stubble**. In light of the fact what we build will be tested by fire... *Wood, hay, and stubble won't pass final inspection!*

If you've not made the progress you thought you would by now, check your posture. You advance only with a bent neck.

Your Lord humbled Himself to become a man. Not just a man – a servant. Not just a servant – a servant unto death. Not just any death – the humiliating death of a criminal on the Cross.

One day everyone will bend before Him! Get a head start.

Applying the Word

Drop down to verse twenty-seven:

[Nehemiah 3:27](#) After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.

These guys were so excited that, once they finished their assigned task, they asked for more work. They put their own noblemen to shame.

If you are a Christian, you are either a Tekoite... or one of their noblemen. It's up to you.

If you are not a Christian... There were some words at the end of chapter two that should send a chill through you. Nehemiah said,

[Nehemiah 2:20](#) ... "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

God's plan and program is unfolding according to prophecy and providence.

You have no part in it until you come in through the Sheep Gate!