

# BUILD-A-BELIEVER WORKSHOPS

## Ezra Nehemiah Esther

---

*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).*

### Text

Nehemiah 11

### Topic

The Jews choose ten percent of their citizens to resettle Jerusalem by casting lots

### Title

*Whole Lotta Settling Goin' On*

**Nehemiah 11:1** Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths *were to dwell in other cities.*

**Nehemiah 11:2** And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 11:3 These *are* the heads of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem. (But in the cities of Judah everyone dwelt in his own possession in their cities - Israelites, priests, Levites, Nethinim, and descendants of Solomon's servants.)

Nehemiah 11:4 Also in Jerusalem dwelt *some* of the children of Judah and of the children of Benjamin. The children of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the children of Perez;

Nehemiah 11:5 and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-Hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiab, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni.

Nehemiah 11:6 All the sons of Perez who dwelt at Jerusalem *were* four hundred and sixty-eight valiant men.

Nehemiah 11:7 And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiab;

Nehemiah 11:8 and after him Gabbai *and* Sallai, nine hundred and twenty-eight.

Nehemiah 11:9 Joel the son of Zichri *was* their overseer, and Judah the son of <sup>£</sup>Senuah *was* second over the city.

Nehemiah 11:10 Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin;

Nehemiah 11:11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiab, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, *was* the leader of the house of God.

Nehemiah 11:12 Their brethren who did the work of the house *were* eight hundred and twenty-two; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah, Nehemiah 11:13 and his brethren, heads of the fathers' *houses*, *were* two hundred and forty-two; and Amashai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, Nehemiah 11:14 and their brethren, mighty men of valor, *were* one hundred and twenty-eight. Their overseer *was* Zabdiel <sup>£</sup>the son of *one of* the great men. Nehemiah 11:15 Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; Nehemiah 11:16 Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the heads of the Levites, *had* the oversight of the business outside of the house of God; Nehemiah 11:17 Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the leader *who* began the thanksgiving with prayer; Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. Nehemiah 11:18 All the Levites in the holy city *were* two hundred and eighty-four. Nehemiah 11:19 Moreover the gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren who kept the gates, *were* one hundred and seventy-two. Nehemiah 11:20 And the rest of Israel, of the priests *and* Levites, *were* in all the cities of Judah, everyone in his inheritance. Nehemiah 11:21 But the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel. And Ziha and Gishpa *were* over the Nethinim. Nehemiah 11:22 Also the overseer of the Levites at Jerusalem *was* Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha, of the sons of Asaph, the singers in charge of the service of the house of God. Nehemiah 11:23 For *it was* the king's command concerning them that a certain portion should be for the singers, a quota day by day. Nehemiah 11:24 Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, *was* the king's deputy in all matters concerning the people. Nehemiah 11:25 And as for the villages with their fields, *some* of the children of Judah dwelt in Kirjath Arba and its villages, Dibon and its villages, Jekabzeel and its villages; Nehemiah 11:26 in Jeshua, Moladah, Beth Pelet, Nehemiah 11:27 Hazar Shual, and Beersheba and its villages; Nehemiah 11:28 in Ziklag and Meconah and its villages; Nehemiah 11:29 in En Rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, Nehemiah 11:30 Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages; in Lachish and its fields; in Azekah and its villages. They dwelt from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom. Nehemiah 11:31 Also the children of Benjamin from Geba *dwelt* in Michmash, Aija, and Bethel, and their villages; Nehemiah 11:32 in Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah; Nehemiah 11:33 in Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim; Nehemiah 11:34 in Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat; Nehemiah 11:35 in Lod, Ono, *and* the Valley of Craftsmen.

Nehemiah 11:36 Some of the Judean divisions of Levites were in Benjamin.

## Introduction

The United States military normally operates using all volunteer troops. The president may call in reserve troops and the national guard to supplement military personnel on active duty.

If the military were to require additional troops after all available reserve personnel had been called to active duty, congress and the president would have to consider reinstating the draft. To reinstate the draft, the congress would have to pass appropriate legislation, and the president would have to approve that legislation. After the president enacted this legislation, the Selective Service System would switch gears rapidly, going from "registration mode" to "draft mode."

The first order of business would be to conduct a national draft lottery. The lottery would determine the order in which eligible men would be drafted. The government would start with all eligible men who turn 20 in the year of the draft. The drafting order within this group would be determined by an impartial, random lottery system.

Our text in chapter eleven of Nehemiah features a draft lottery. There were not enough volunteers to repopulate Jerusalem, so Nehemiah held a lottery and drafted ten percent of the rural citizens to move to the city.

Churches are always asking for volunteer help. Sometimes there aren't enough volunteers. Should we draft you?

We're not going to hold a lottery! I am going to suggest to you that God still 'drafts' you into His service. He has a 'lot' or 'lots' for you - your lots in life to discover and to develop.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 God Has A 'Lot' For You To Discover In His Community, and #2 God Has A 'Lot' For You To Develop In Your Communities.

#1 God Has A 'Lot'  
For You To Discover In His Community  
(v1-24)

A lottery system seems random to us. We call games of chance 'lotteries,' and think of the winners as being lucky.

The Jews had an entirely different attitude about casting lots. In Proverbs 16:33 you read, **the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing of is of the Lord.** The Jews were so confident of God's sovereignty that they saw the casting of lots not as random chance or luck, but as revealing the will of God.

We don't cast lots today to reveal God's will. Instead we have the completed Word of God, the Bible; and we have the indwelling Spirit of God.

I think sometimes, however, we have lost a sense of God's sovereignty in His choosing our lots in life. If you listen to the way some Christians talk, it's almost as if our choices in life are up to us, then we ask God to bless them.

We should often be reminded that God has very definite plans for our lives. It's up to us to discover and develop them.

The first lessons from chapter eleven involve the Jews who would live in community with one another in Jerusalem. We can roughly equate their experiences with our experiences as believers living in community with one another in the Church.

The first people we encounter in the chapter are the **leaders:**

**Nehemiah 11:1** Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem...

God still chooses leaders. He casts their lot. You discover you are cast as a leader as you are raised-up among God's people. It seems there are always a lot of volunteers for leadership! Christians must not understand the cost. Take a look at Nehemiah. When Nehemiah first arrived, Jerusalem lay in ruin. The walls were a

pile of rubble. Most of the Jews had chosen the relatively safer villages away from Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, Nehemiah and [the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem](#). It's just a few words that state a simple fact, but it tells us a great deal about the cost of spiritual leadership:

1. While most everyone else looked at the physical condition of Jerusalem, and made the rational decision to settle elsewhere; these guys were led by God to settle in the city.
2. Living in Jerusalem, they saw what God wanted to do with the city. They looked forward to what it could become, and would become, *if* everyone got on board. While others were establishing families and farms and preparing for the future, these guys worked to build a spiritual future for God's people.
3. After all their sacrifice and labor, **no one still wanted to live in Jerusalem!** Can you spell *d-i-s-c-o-u-r-a-g-m-e-n-t*?

Leadership is a wonderful lot – if it is God's lot for you. Let it come to you; don't seek it.

The leaders discerned God's plan for repopulating the holy city:

[Nehemiah 11:1](#) Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths *were to dwell in other cities*.

This is radical stuff! It would be like me getting up and announcing that ten percent of our membership must go on a short term mission in 2007, then developing a draft lottery.

Instead, we discern God's plans, then ask for volunteers. That is as far as we are to go as leaders. What I am suggesting is that we all get back to thinking that God takes it from there and casts some of us into service. It's up to each of us to discover when and where.

The lottery was held. A tenth of the families were drafted to relocate.

[Nehemiah 11:2](#) And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

Even though chosen by lot, they are described as willing. They knew that God had sovereignly chosen them.

It's interesting that these folks are said to have **offered** themselves. They offered themselves willingly, as living sacrifices.

Names, names, names. Though we must gloss over them, they are important to God. **So is your name!** As we sometimes sing, *He knows your name*. It may not be written in the Bible; but, if you are a believer, it is written in the Book of Life, in Heaven.

Verses four through nineteen list five different groups in Jerusalem: descendants of Judah (in verses 4-6), descendants of Benjamin (in verses 7-9), priests (in verses 10-14), Levites (in verses 15-18), and gatekeepers (in verse 19).

Verses twenty through twenty-four are a kind of footnote to clarify certain details.

The five different groups we mentioned can be further divided into two main categories: There were citizens, and there were servants.

The descendants of **Judah** and **Benjamin** who were drafted by lottery to repopulate Jerusalem were its everyday citizens. The **priests**, **Levites**, and **gatekeepers** were the Temple servants.

What can we make of this? It reminds us that our Church needs to maintain a solid spiritual infrastructure so that any citizen or potential citizen of God's kingdom can come to meet with the Lord.

Let's break it down a little further:

1. On any given Sunday, or Wednesday night, you might not be part of the spiritual infrastructure that is cast by God to serve others. Does that mean you are free to do whatever you want? To come to Church, or to go somewhere else, or to simply stay home? *Not really!* It's up to God. He may want to cast you to attend; or He may cast you somewhere else. But all of us need to return to thinking that it is a matter of what God casts, not what we choose.

2. If you are cast as a servant – **then be there and be the servant God fills you to be.**

My only point is this:

1 Corinthians 6:19 ...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.

Let God cast you and you will discover your lot in His community.

#2 God Has A 'Lot'  
For You To Develop In Your Communities  
(v25-36)

The Jews had been reluctant to repopulate Jerusalem. Ten percent were chosen. Were the other ninety percent a bunch of losers?

No; not at all. In fact, the remaining verses 'cast' them in a very favorable light.

Nehemiah 11:25 And as for the villages with their fields...

If we understood the geography of the Holy Land in the fifth century, we'd recognize that the Jews settling out in the villages were pressing-out to the very borders of God's original land grant to their ancestors. They were expanding Israel's borders.

The application for us might be to look at our lives as Christians outside of the Church and in the various communities in which we live most of the time.

By 'communities' I mean things like our neighborhoods, our job sites, our schools, the places we shop and recreate; all of those relationships when we are not meeting together for worship.

God has a lot for you to develop in those communities! Let me give you an example. Back when I worked for a title company, myself and the only two other believers there began meeting together weekly to pray for each other and the salvation of our co-workers.

At one point, two couples – all unbelievers – asked me if I'd teach a weekly home Bible study for them. I agreed. The first week went well. The second week was a nightmare! We lived in the San Bernardino mountains. It was storming in the valley, snowing on the hill. Nevertheless I thought it was my lot in life to teach the study. When I arrived... *No one was home!* (Or they were hiding). In fact, I never taught the study a second time. The couples made-up some lame excuse as to why we could no longer meet.

That second night, I decided to stop by the office to call Pam and let her know what was going on. (It was before the age of cell phones!). One of the title officers, Dave White, was working late. He began peppering me with questions about God and eternal life. I essentially gave *him* the Bible study!

A short time later, he quit and went to work for another company. A short time after that, I heard he had died suddenly.

It had all been cast by God.

Wherever you are, when you are outside the Church, God has cast you there. **Develop something!** Push the boundaries; expand your spiritual borders.

Applying the Word...

Jerusalem wasn't a desirable place to live. The people were living much more comfortably, with some material success as farmers, out in the villages.

But Jerusalem had something that should have been a draw for settlers: God's very presence was there, filling the Temple!