

ABOUT THIS SERIES

We are starting something new today, and I want you to understand why it matters before we ever open the text. We live in a culture that has quietly taught us to measure our lives by who is watching. We have been trained to ask how many people liked it, how many showed up, how many clapped, before we ever ask whether the thing we are doing is actually worth doing. And that way of thinking will slowly talk you out of the most important work God ever hands you, because the most important work is almost never the work that draws a crowd. Over these next four weeks we are going to sit with Nehemiah, a man who gave himself to rebuilding something broken while people mocked him, doubted him, and tried to pull him off the wall. And we are going to borrow one familiar line from an old movie, if you build it, he will come, to ask a far more honest question of ourselves. Are we building what God placed on our hearts, or are we only willing to build what people will celebrate? This series is about your marriage, your family, your faith, your business, your calling, every quiet, unapplauded thing God has asked you to restore. And it begins with a simple, stubborn charge: build it anyway.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES (NKJV)

Nehemiah 1:4

"So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven."

Nehemiah 2:18

"And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, Let us rise up and build. Then they set their hands to this good work."

Nehemiah 4:3

"Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall."

Nehemiah 4:5 through 7 (Primary Text)

"Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders. So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry."

Nehemiah 4:20

"Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

Matthew 5:44

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

THE HEART OF IT

I am not building for attention. I am building with intention.

Not everyone who can see what you are building will understand why you are building it. Build it anyway.

INTRODUCTION: THE FIELD NOBODY ASKED FOR

In 1989, Field of Dreams gave us Ray Kinsella, an ordinary Iowa farmer trying to keep his farm and provide for his family. Walking through his cornfield one evening, he hears a voice say, if you build it, he will come. Most of us quote it wrong. We say they will come. But the voice said he. Ray was not being told to draw a crowd. He was being drawn into something whose full purpose he did not yet understand.

And look at what it costs him. He is not standing in an empty lot; he is standing in the land that feeds his family, being led toward something that makes no financial sense. Nobody asked for a baseball field. Nobody offered to pay for one. Nobody promised a single person would show up. Yet Ray becomes convinced it has to be built. He knows what he is being led to build before he understands why. He has the picture, but not the purpose. And to everybody watching, it looks unreasonable, because he is giving up productive land for something that may never produce a thing.

Have you ever known something needed to be done, but struggled because nobody else seemed to understand why it mattered? Rebuilding your family. Starting a business. Changing the direction of your life. Getting serious with God. You feel the weight of it, and the people around you do not. That is the challenge of building something meaningful. Not everyone who can see what you are building will understand why. And because they do not, we start to question the timing, our ability, whether it is even worth it.

But what if the value of what you are building is not determined by the reaction of the people watching you build it? Somewhere along the way, culture convinced us that success is measured by how many people show up to celebrate it. Scripture gives us another way, and that brings us to Nehemiah.

FROM THE CORNFIELD TO THE WALL

Nehemiah is another man consumed with building, but he is not chasing a voice; he is responding to a troubling report. In chapter 1 he learns that the survivors back in Judah are in great distress, Jerusalem's wall broken down and its gates burned. And a wall in the ancient world was not decoration. It meant protection, security, and standing. A city with broken walls was a city living exposed. So Nehemiah is not hearing that a project is overdue. He is hearing that his people are living in shame.

Watch his response. Nehemiah 1:4 says he sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed. Before he develops a plan for the wall, he develops a burden for the people. That is where many of us need a

shift. We ask whether something is profitable before we ask whether it is purposeful, whether it will get attention before whether it meets a real need, how much recognition we will get before whether the work is even worth doing. Nehemiah does the opposite. He sees something broken and sets out to restore it. Sometimes an assignment does not begin with a supernatural announcement. Sometimes it begins with a problem you can no longer ignore. Not every problem you see is yours to solve; discernment still matters. But Nehemiah's burden moves him to prayer, planning, authorization, and organizing, and by chapter 4 the work is underway. And meaningful work does not mean everyone supports it. The opposite happens.

MOVEMENT ONE: DO NOT LET THE OPPOSITION REDEFINE THE ASSIGNMENT

Nehemiah 4:5 NKJV

"Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders."

To understand verse 5, you have to know what just happened. Sanballat and Tobiah have been mocking the builders, and in verse 3 Tobiah sneers that even a fox climbing the wall would break it down. They are publicly painting the work as weak, useless, and destined to fail. And Nehemiah responds with prayer. But it is not a gentle request to bless his critics; he asks God to hold them accountable. The Hebrew carries the weight: awon is iniquity and guilt, chattat is sin and offense. He is asking God not to overlook the wrongdoing of those trying to tear down the work.

This is an imprecatory prayer, an appeal for divine judgment, and it belongs to the covenant setting of the Old Testament. As people who follow Jesus, we also read our response to enemies through His words, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. This is not permission to pray down fire on everyone who frustrates us. But the leadership principle is unmistakable. Nehemiah takes his complaint to God while keeping his hands on the work. He does not pretend the hostility is harmless. He names it, prays about it, and the building keeps moving.

How many people have abandoned real progress because they got consumed with answering critics? How many marriages stalled because two people cared more about winning the argument than restoring the relationship? How many believers let someone else's opinion decide whether they keep pursuing a healthy change? You can acknowledge the offense without surrendering your assignment to it. Not everyone who questions your work is your enemy, and sometimes criticism carries information you need. But it cannot become the authority that sets your direction.

You can acknowledge the offense without surrendering your assignment to it.

Everyone who questions your work is not your enemy. But criticism was never meant to become the authority that determines your direction.

MOVEMENT TWO: THE WORK REQUIRES MORE THAN INSPIRATION

Nehemiah 4:6 NKJV

"So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work."

This verse is the heartbeat of the entire series. Hear how it opens. So we built the wall. Not, so we kept talking about the wall. Not, so we waited until everybody supported it. Not, so we waited for better circumstances. Nehemiah says, so we built. But this was not reckless construction. Earlier he had examined the damage, communicated the need, secured authorization, and organized the people. This was conviction joined to deliberate action. And that matters, because we so easily confuse being inspired with being committed. We get excited about a vision. We get emotional when somebody describes a possibility. But eventually inspiration has to become participation. Inspiration introduces you to the possibility. Commitment makes you responsible for the progress.

You can be inspired to rebuild your marriage, but somebody has to start communicating differently. You can be inspired to grow spiritually, but somebody has to open the Bible and pray. You can be inspired to build a business, but somebody has to make the plan and serve the customers. You can be inspired by the vision of a church, but somebody has to disciple people and carry out the mission. Nehemiah says, so we built, and then tells us why the wall was rising: for the people had a mind to work.

The Hebrew word translated mind is *leb*, the word usually translated heart, and in Hebrew thought the heart was not just the seat of emotion. It was the place of thought, intention, willingness, and decision. So the people had a mind to work means their hearts were engaged in the assignment. They were not merely excited about a restored wall; they were committed to rebuilding it. And notice, the text does not say Nehemiah had a mind to work. It says the people did. No leader, however gifted, accomplishes a meaningful assignment alone. A vision cannot reach its potential when the leader carries the conviction but the people refuse the responsibility. We cannot keep wanting the benefits of restoration while refusing the work of rebuilding.

Inspiration introduces you to the possibility. Commitment makes you responsible for the progress.

Before we talk about what we want to build with our hands, we have to examine what has captured our hearts.

MOVEMENT THREE: STOP MEASURING SUCCESS BY WHO IS WATCHING

Nehemiah 4:6 NKJV

"...and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height..."

The wall was joined together, but only halfway to its intended height. The assignment was not finished, and yet the verse records real progress. This is where our culture hands us a broken definition of success, treating visibility as proof of value. How many watched it? How many liked it? How many showed up? Those numbers can be useful, but they cannot tell the whole story. A father who spent years rebuilding the relationship with his children has no crowd celebrating it. A mother creating a healthier home gets no public announcement. A believer finally building a consistent prayer life after years of inconsistency may have nobody see it happen. A small church faithfully developing

people has no larger room to point to. Does that mean the work has no value? Of course not. Culture celebrates what can be counted. God also cares about what is being cultivated.

And the wall was only halfway up, yet the people had already accomplished something real. We have to stop dismissing progress just because completion has not arrived. Some of us are so fixated on what is not finished that we no longer recognize what God has already done. The relationship may not be fully restored, but the communication has improved. You may not have hit every financial goal, but you have started healthier habits. You may not have the maturity you want, but you are no longer living in the same patterns. You are not finished, but you are building, and that matters. An incomplete work does not mean insignificant progress. But what happens when that progress starts to attract resistance? Nehemiah tells us next.

Culture celebrates what can be counted. God also cares about what is being cultivated.

Just because the work is incomplete does not mean the progress is insignificant.

MOVEMENT FOUR: PROGRESS CAN CHANGE THE REACTION OF PEOPLE AROUND YOU

Nehemiah 4:7 NKJV

"Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry."

Watch what shifts in verse 7. Before, the opposition was mostly ridicule. Now, as the repairs advance, the hostility intensifies. The gaps were beginning to be closed, and the Hebrew behind that repair carries the imagery of restoration, of healing. The openings that left the city exposed were being sealed, the walls becoming secure, and the opponents recognized the whole situation was changing. This was never just people offended by a construction project. A restored Jerusalem meant shifting security and power in the region. Progress itself became the threat.

But notice the order. The people worked. The wall progressed. The gaps started closing. And then the opposition intensified. Their anger escalated as the restoration advanced. We have to be careful not to turn that into a formula that says every time someone opposes us, we must be in God's will. Sometimes criticism is legitimate and our plans need correcting. But Nehemiah shows us that meaningful restoration can genuinely unsettle people who were comfortable with things staying broken.

When a person sets healthier boundaries, not everyone appreciates them. When an organization introduces accountability, some people resist it. When a family corrects destructive patterns, it creates uncomfortable conversations. When a believer changes habits and priorities, some relationships feel the tension. Not because every one of those people is malicious, but because meaningful change disrupts familiar arrangements. Not everyone who was comfortable with your broken condition will celebrate your restoration. But you cannot let someone else's comfort with your brokenness become your reason for staying broken.

Not everyone who was comfortable with your broken condition will celebrate your restoration.

You cannot allow someone else's comfort with your brokenness to become your reason for remaining broken.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER: IF YOU BUILD IT, HE WILL COME

Go back to the movie. Ray stands in his cornfield and hears, if you build it, he will come. He does not fully understand the purpose of what he is being asked to build, but he begins. And eventually that field becomes the setting for something far greater than baseball. The story leads to reconciliation between Ray and his father, something he could not have understood when the work began. The field was never the ultimate point. It was the place where something meaningful became possible. And that is the lesson. Sometimes we get so focused on the visible project that we miss the deeper purpose it was meant to serve. We want to build a church, but the purpose was never just to fill a building; it is to disciple people, cultivate real community, honor God, and help people live out their purpose. We want to build a family, but the purpose was never just the appearance of a successful household; it is love, trust, stability, and healthy relationships. We want to build a business, but its worth cannot be measured only in money; it is the value we create, the people we serve, and the integrity we carry. We want to build a better life, but we cannot let social media, public approval, or comparison define what a better life even looks like.

So when we say, if you build it, he will come, we have to be clear about what we are actually saying. We are not saying God refuses to show up until we finish something. We are not saying faithful work guarantees the exact outcome we want. God was already helping Nehemiah long before the wall was finished. In Nehemiah 2:18 Nehemiah speaks of the good hand of God upon him, and in 4:20 he declares that God will fight for the people. God's presence was not the reward for a completed wall. It was part of the reason the work could continue at all. That is what separates the biblical picture from the popular reading of Field of Dreams. We do not build to make God notice us. We build because God has already called us to participate in His work. We build confident that He sees faithful obedience even when no one else recognizes it, and as the work goes on, we start to see dimensions of His purpose we could not see when we began.

CONCLUSION: BUILD IT ANYWAY

So what are you building? And even more important, why are you building it? Because if your reason for building is applause, you will always need an audience. If your reason is recognition, you will always need somebody watching. If your reason is popularity, you will always need people to agree with you. And if validation becomes the reason you build, then disappointment will eventually become the reason you stop. But Nehemiah shows us another way. The people had a mind to work. Their willingness was rooted in a commitment to restoration, and even though the wall was not finished, they kept making progress.

So here is the challenge. Build the family. Rebuild the trust. Develop the discipline. Strengthen your relationship with God. Cultivate the community. Do the work that actually serves people. Do not

chase something just because it will make you visible, and do not abandon something meaningful just because it is not getting attention. Do not let culture convince you that something has no value because nobody is applauding. Build it anyway. Not recklessly, not arrogantly, not without prayer, discernment, or accountability, but faithfully. Because there is a difference between building something so people can see you and building something because you recognize what needs to be restored. Ray wanted to know who would come. Nehemiah's people understood why the work mattered. And for us the challenge is not to get people to show up for what we have built. It is to be faithful with what God has entrusted to us. Because the greatest value of what you are building may not be the attention it receives. It may be the lives that are changed through it.

I am not building for attention. I am building with intention.

THE MOVEMENT OF NEHEMIAH 4:5 THROUGH 7

- Verse 5. Prayer despite opposition. Nehemiah refuses to let hostility consume the work.
 - Verse 6. Commitment produces progress. The people develop a mind to work and the wall rises.
 - Verse 7. Progress generates resistance. As the gaps close, the opposition intensifies.
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A CLOSING WORD

Have we become so concerned about who will come when we finish building that we have forgotten why God called us to the work in the first place? Build it anyway. The hands that stay faithful when no one is watching are the ones God was building all along.

Next in the series: Part 2 — The Cost of Construction

No Games. No Gimmicks. Just God.

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