



RISE and BUILD

“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 2:18

The Story of Nehemiah

- 1.) Nehemiah was a cupbearer.

- 2.) Nehemiah found favor.

- 3.) Nehemiah met opposition.

- 4.) Nehemiah was a team player.

We should:

- 1.) Build our lives.

- 2.) Build our homes.

- 3.) Build our church and world.



Women's Ministries Day Message 2021- Rise and Build

Background

The National Focus for Women's Ministries last year was RISE. This theme was inspired by Acts 26:16, "But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you." From this passage, we challenged women to Rise, Stand, and Go. We emphasized the importance that all women believers are called to be ministers and witnesses of the gospel, and we encouraged women to RISE to the calling and purposes of the Lord in their life.

RISE continues to be our theme this year, but we focus on the word BUILD in 2021. The Scripture context for our verse this year is 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."

Introduction

How many of you have ever taken on a building project? You may have built a home, or a piece of furniture, or a sandcastle, or helped your child build a Lego tower.

(*in your own words, spend a few minutes sharing a personal story of building something – feel free to add humor)

Just as we learn many lessons in the process of building, there is also a great deal to learn about building from the story of Nehemiah. Many women find themselves a bit scattered right now. Many of our "normals" have been disrupted. It's hard to know where to go from here. Amidst and post-pandemic, we may feel lost, but we can't continue to stay on the sidelines any longer. As our friend, Michelle Anthony, says, "it's time we start creating in the rubble, dreaming in the dark, and forging through the fog." Let's explore Nehemiah's story in a bit more detail to see how we can begin building again.

The Story of Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a Jew who had been born into captivity in Babylon. He had never seen Jerusalem and never known freedom. He was the cupbearer to the king and got word that Jerusalem was struggling, and its walls were lying in ruins. He wept and prayed over his city (to which he had never been) and felt called to help rebuild. Nehemiah found favor with the king and went back to Jerusalem to help rebuild the walls. Nehemiah led the third migration of Jews from Babylon back to Jerusalem, following Ezra.

So, what is noteworthy in this story?

1.) Nehemiah was a cupbearer.

O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer. -Nehemiah 1:11

This Scripture references Nehemiah's prayer to God and tells us of his role as cupbearer. He was one of the closest people to the king, and his job was to test out food and drink before the king partook to ensure it wasn't poisoned. Cupbearers had to be cultured and knowledgeable in law and politics. Although Nehemiah was a cupbearer living in Persia, his heart was in Jerusalem like all Jews.

The cupbearer was an essential and vital role, but it was the role of a layman. God used a layman named Nehemiah, who was obedient, to bring restoration to Jerusalem. God continues to use everyday people like you and me to fulfill His purposes on the earth. As women, we often struggle to see our self-value and self-worth, and we disqualify ourselves from the things we feel called to do. Perhaps it's just fear—fear of inadequacy or failure that keeps us from being obedient. Regardless, the Lord has called us all to be ministers and witnesses of the gospel and has tasked us all with unique purposes to fulfill. Who knew the cupbearer to the king would go on to lead the charge of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Perhaps the Lord is leading you to get involved in a new ministry. Maybe you are being drawn to write cards or bake goodies to share with the neighbors on your street. He could be inviting you to start a non-profit to partner with Him in Kingdom work. No matter how big or small your mission may seem, it matters in the plan of God. What has the Lord been stirring in your heart lately? Have you been afraid to pursue that nudge? He is calling all of us to His gospel mission. Don't disqualify yourself. Embrace the destiny inside of you.

2.) Nehemiah found favor.

Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it. Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. -Nehemiah 2:4-6

King Artaxerxes picked up on Nehemiah's sadness at the state of Jerusalem and inquired about his well-being. Nehemiah requested to go back to the land of his fathers' graves that lied in ruins. Nehemiah found favor with the king, and it pleased the king to send him back. The king also equipped him with resources. It's far more significant to venture into a mission with favor on our side.

Sometimes we force our way to success. Maybe we rush it and push our way through a door of opportunity before it's time, and it causes us to fail. I've heard it stated before the "shake several doorknobs until the right one opens" or "follow the favor." These phrases mean we should follow the Holy Spirit's leading into the open doors He gives us to walk through. When you feel called into action by the Lord, it is important first to commit yourself to prayer and then seek out the Lord's favor for the mission. Don't rush it or bulldoze your way in; trust the Lord's timing and the Lord's way. Our plans motivated by selfish ambition will always be second best to what God's plans are.

3.) Nehemiah met opposition.

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?” -Nehemiah 2:19

Nehemiah’s plan was under God’s providence and the favor of the king; therefore, we could have predicted he would experience opposition. Whenever we get ready to take on any work for God, we can expect a bullseye on our back. The enemy wants to thwart the plans of God before they even get off the ground. Nehemiah answered this opposition by pointing the naysayers to the God of heaven who would prosper his efforts. Later on, in chapter four of the book, Nehemiah was opposed further by ridicule, discouragement, greed, selfishness, and distraction. As believers, we must accept that we will meet opposition when living out the plans of God in our lives. We have to learn to turn off the naysayers’ voices and discouragement and listen only to the voice of the Lord in these times. Have you allowed the opinions of others to keep you from acting on something you feel called to do? If you struggle to find your way and the voices and noise all around keep you from thinking and acting with clarity, spend some time alone with the Lord. His voice is the only one we need to hear.

4.) Nehemiah was a team player.

Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. -Nehemiah 3:1-2

Throughout chapter 3, you see many people working together, and the phrase “next to” is utilized many times. In this passage, we see that the work of building is not one man’s job but the job of a team. In this story, 38 individuals and 42 groups are mentioned in the building efforts, but Nehemiah’s name is not mentioned one time. Our efforts are multiplied when we submit to teamwork. We truly are better together. Nehemiah is a strong and effective leader because he knows the task at hand will be completed most effectively by the team he is surrounded with. Teamwork has its challenges. Sometimes it means setting aside our personal opinions or ways of doing things. It may be especially difficult for those who are so-called “control freaks.” However, when we allow the gifts that everyone individually brings to the table to come together, it positively impacts our end result. Jethro warned Moses that he couldn’t do things alone and it would be wise of him to delegate tasks. We should take this same advice. Allowing others to participate in the things God has called you to produces excellent fruit.

Where might you be called to build?

Build Your Life

As believers, we never fully arrive at a final destination on our spiritual journey this side of heaven. There is always room to grow, more to learn, and more ways to become like Jesus. The Lord may be calling you to build upon our spiritual foundation by spending more time in His Word. Perhaps He is calling you to a more dedicated season of prayer and fasting. You may even feel called to a season of committing Scripture to memory. There are many ways we can actively build up the spiritual foundation of our lives. It is essential for us first to build up this area of our lives, so we can be successful in pouring out of that well to build other areas.

Build Your Home

The atmosphere we help set in our home matters. How we invest in the relationships we have with our parents, spouse, children, friends, and anyone who enters our home is so important. Our

relationships don't grow passively. We should intentionally be investing in developing deeper relationships with the built-in community we find in our family. We should be seeking wisdom from the Lord on how best to disciple and shepherd the younger ones in our care. Additionally, we should be challenging and encouraging our spouse, parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, and others as we seek to become more like Jesus together and build the Kingdom of God.

Build the Church and World

We have been commissioned to go into the world and make disciples. It isn't an optional suggestion. It is what we are called to do. We must get involved with a local church community. We were designed to be in the Christian community. Our collective gifts reveal the glory of God to the world. It's no longer okay to sit on the sidelines and show up to the feeding trough at church without getting your hands dirty. It's time we roll up our sleeves and get involved in the work the Lord is doing in our local congregations. We also should be investing in the living of those all around us. We should know our neighbors, the local cashier that helps with our groceries every week, the other parents on our kid's ball team. We often lead such a hurried life. It is so important that we take the time to pause and truly "see" others. Ask the Lord every day to reveal people to you that you should be getting to know. In your friendship and love shown to others, Jesus Christ is displayed, and the Kingdom is built.

Closing

Women play an influential role in the Kingdom of God. We are made in the image of God Almighty. We have been given gifts and talents that are for the good of others and the glory of God. The Lord is calling us to rise in this season of uncertainty to build for the sake of the gospel. He calls us right where we are, just like he did with Nehemiah. We are wise to pray and seek the Lord and wait on His favor and provision. We must realize opposition will come, and by building ourselves up in the most holy faith, we can have a plan to defeat this opposition. Embracing the team around us is also a vital part of God's plan for our life. We shouldn't be doing life alone. Many areas need to be built. Seek the Lord today for how he is calling you to build your own life, your home, and the church and world around you. We believe in you and are thankful for the gift you are to the Kingdom of God. Go rise and build.

*You could add a demonstrative component to the message by having women write down something they feel called to build on a block. They could stack and build a structure with the blocks to symbolize what they are committing to build.