

## **“Are You Willing to Live for the Kingdom of God?”**

*Nehemiah 11:1-12:26*

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(Lord's Day Service, February 18, 2018)

### **Nehemiah 11:1-12:26**

**11** Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem and the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. <sup>2</sup>And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>These are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the towns of Judah everyone lived on his property in their towns: Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants. <sup>4</sup>And in Jerusalem lived certain of the sons of Judah and of the sons of Benjamin. Of the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uziah, son of Zechariah, son of Amariah, son of Shephatiah, son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez; <sup>5</sup>and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, son of Col-hozeh, son of Hazaiah, son of Adaiiah, son of Joiarib, son of Zechariah, son of the Shilonite. <sup>6</sup>All the sons of Perez who lived in Jerusalem were 468 valiant men.

<sup>7</sup>And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, son of Joed, son of Pedaiah, son of Kolaiah, son of Maaseiah, son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah, <sup>8</sup>and his brothers, men of valor, 928. <sup>9</sup>Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer; and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second over the city.

<sup>10</sup>Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin, <sup>11</sup>Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Maraioth, son of Ahitub, ruler of the house of God, <sup>12</sup>and their brothers who did the work of the house, 822; and Adaiiah the son of Jeroham, son of Pelaliah, son of Amzi, son of Zechariah, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, <sup>13</sup>and his brothers, heads of fathers' houses, 242; and Amashsai, the son of Azarel, son of Ahzai, son of Meshillemoth, son of Immer, <sup>14</sup>and their brothers, mighty men of valor, 128; their overseer was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim.

<sup>15</sup>And of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, son of Bunni; <sup>16</sup>and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chiefs of the Levites, who were over the outside work of the house of God; <sup>17</sup>and Mattaniah the son of Mica, son of Zabdi, son of Asaph, who was the leader of the praise, who gave thanks, and Bakbukiah, the second among his brothers; and Abda the son of Shammua, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun. <sup>18</sup>All the Levites in the holy city were 284.

<sup>19</sup>The gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their brothers, who kept watch at the gates, were 172.

<sup>20</sup>And the rest of Israel, and of the priests and the Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, every one in his inheritance. <sup>21</sup>But the temple servants lived on Ophel; and Ziha and Gishpa were over the temple servants.

<sup>22</sup>The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, son of Hashabiah, son of Mattaniah, son of Mica, of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over the work of the house of God.

<sup>23</sup>For there was a command from the king concerning them, and a fixed provision for the singers, as every day required. <sup>24</sup>And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's side in all matters concerning the people.

<sup>25</sup>And as for the villages, with their fields, some of the people of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its villages, and in Dibon and its villages, and in Jekabzeel and its villages, <sup>26</sup>and in Jeshua and in Moladah and Beth-pelet, <sup>27</sup>in Hazar-shual, in Beersheba and its villages, <sup>28</sup>in Ziklag, in Meconah and its villages, <sup>29</sup>in En-rimmon, in Zorah, in Jarmuth, <sup>30</sup>Zanoah, Adullam, and their

villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its villages. So they encamped from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom. <sup>31</sup>The people of Benjamin also lived from Geba onward, at Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its villages, <sup>32</sup>Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, <sup>33</sup>Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim, <sup>34</sup>Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, <sup>35</sup>Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen. <sup>36</sup>And certain divisions of the Levites in Judah were assigned to Benjamin.

**12** These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, <sup>2</sup>Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, <sup>3</sup>Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, <sup>4</sup>Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah, <sup>5</sup>Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, <sup>6</sup>Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, <sup>7</sup>Sallu, Amok, Hilkiyah, Jedaiah. These were the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua.

<sup>8</sup>And the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, who with his brothers was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving. <sup>9</sup>And Bakbukiah and Unni and their brothers stood opposite them in the service. <sup>10</sup>And Jeshua was the father of Joiakim, Joiakim the father of Eliashib, Eliashib the father of Joiada, <sup>11</sup>Joiada the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan the father of Jaddua.

<sup>12</sup>And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' houses: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; <sup>13</sup>of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; <sup>14</sup>of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; <sup>15</sup>of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; <sup>16</sup>of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam; <sup>17</sup>of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai; <sup>18</sup>of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; <sup>19</sup>of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; <sup>20</sup>of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber; <sup>21</sup>of Hilkiyah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

<sup>22</sup>In the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the Levites were recorded as heads of the fathers' houses; so too were the priests in the reign of Darius the Persian. <sup>23</sup>As for the sons of Levi, their heads of fathers' houses were written in the Book of the Chronicles until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. <sup>24</sup>And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch. <sup>25</sup>Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard at the storehouses of the gates. <sup>26</sup>These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and of Ezra, the priest and scribe.

## **Introduction**

The first seven chapters of the book of Nehemiah are about building the wall, the next three chapters are about the renewal of the people, and the last three chapters are about the restoration of the city. These one and a half chapters are a list of the people who repopulated Jerusalem and the surrounding cities.

When I look at these names, I ask why they are included in the Bible, whether we should read the entire text before preaching, and what I would even preach about. Then I came to my senses as a pastor called by God: even this is part of God's Word. The congregation might never read this on their own, and I am called to teach the whole counsel of God. If we skip this part of the Word of God, whether by not reading or not preaching from it, I am robbing from them the precious treasure of embedded grace that they could receive through this passage.

Rather than a temporary listener who asks, "What does it say for me?", become a foundational listener who simply asks, "What does God say?". Grow in your system so that through the Word you can look at any topics and issues, able to make decisions in your life. Even a part of the Bible that seems like it has nothing to do with you still has much grace of God.

This passage contains a lengthy register of names of Jewish citizens. The first two verses explain the repopulation. There are then five kinds of names: families who repopulated Jerusalem, families who lived in the cities of Judah and Benjamin, priests and Levites of Zerubbabel's return, the high priests, and the priests and Levites after Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

Though it seems like we are reading a phone book, this is no rabble of refugees settling down anywhere. The names are the testimonies of God's faithfulness to His promises. The repopulation of Jerusalem was one of the major fulfillments of God's promises given to Abraham. God led them from slavery to the Promised Land, picturing what He does for His people in the kingdom of God.

The people living in Jerusalem follow their calling to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They had willing hearts to do whatever God wanted them to do, and each functioned in their own unique capacity. As we examine this list and understand their situations from a historical context, we can learn wonderful factors about how we can live for God's kingdom. We are all living in God's plan, in the flow of redemptive history. All of God's people should be kingdom-minded and ministry-oriented in every facet of our lives. The following four questions are not just for today but a framework for the rest of your life.

## **I. Are you willing to live where God wants you to live?**

Verse 1 shows us there was a casting of lots and that people moved intentionally and strategically into different places. Even after the wall was built, few lived in Jerusalem. One scholar conservatively estimates there were about 10,000 were commanded to live in the city. The previous destruction left much rubble, making it still difficult and possibly dangerous to live in the city. Jerusalem had been defenseless, without a wall, for over 140 years. It would have required much work to clear the rubble and restore the city. There were no apartments or houses; all these had to be built to live in the city.

As the former capital, the restored city would have been a major target for enemies who knew that the Jews had just rebuilt the wall and were not a strong nation. At first, there was not much economic opportunity. It would be far easier to settle outside and farm your own plots of ground. Most people were content to live in the surrounding villages where their families used to live. But Nehemiah knew that if the city was to be strong and prosperous, if the worship was to thrive so that they could be the nation that proclaimed the name of God, the city had to be well-populated with citizens who could defend it in case of attack. We can call this "kingdom gentrification" to make God's name known. It was not racially or economically motivated, but kingdom motivated.

Verse 2 says the people did not grumble but willingly offered to live in Jerusalem. It seems that after the revival in chapters 8 through 10, everybody was so missions-minded that they were willing to do anything God asked. Although it was inconvenient, undesirable, and even dangerous to move from the country to the city, the people were willing to move to serve God's purpose.

As you grow older, graduate, and start to work, first consider God's will in how to serve. Do not decide where you want to live out of desire to move to a major city or find warmer weather. Nowadays we can go anywhere in the world, but be intentional about praying through where you will live.

When CFC began, it was a given that when you graduated you would move to a major city in search of the best possible job, which is not bad if done with the intention of serving

God. But we began to teach from Ephesians that there are three callings: work, family, and *church*. Americans typically move because of a job, then look for a church and raise a family. There is nothing wrong doing this prayerfully and intentionally. But because Scripture says that work, family, and church are equally important in the kingdom of God, I wondered, why not choose a church first and then find a job there? I first received backlash for preaching this, but people listened, leading to the adult and young adult community here. People choose to build the kingdom of God, then find a job and raise a family here.

Pray through and be intentional about where to live. If you find a legitimate job and go and look for a church, that is a good thing. But if you have options, choose the best church possible for the sake of the kingdom and then find a job. Be intentional about how you can serve the LORD. Expand God's kingdom together in those places. This happens on a minor scale where people intentionally decide to stay in dorms and treat it like a missions field. This is a small but Biblical practice. Some might leave to major cities and reach out to different ethnicities. Do this prayerfully and intentionally.

Rebuilding the city of Jerusalem is centered around building their religious base. Church is so important in the Scripture. If possible, always go to a place where there is a good church. If not, go plant a church and community. Church is not just a place we go to. Just as family and career decisions are important, church decisions are important. Decide the place to live prayerfully considering everything in balance.

## **II. Are you willing to serve in the arenas where God calls you to serve**

1. The heads of families in Jerusalem (11:3-9)
2. The priests (11:10-14)
3. The Levites (11:15-18)
4. The gatekeepers (11:19-20)
5. The temple servants (11:21)
6. The officials appointed by the king of Persia (11:22-24)
7. The people who lived outside the city (11:25-36)

Each group served in its respective arena for the effective operation of the city and the nation. Those who lived outside of the city had to farm the land to provide food for those in the city. Each had a different role, but each role was vital to the entire cause. In the body of Christ, God has gifted us differently, but every part is vital for the overall function and health of the body.

Consider a part of your body shutting down. If you jam your toe, you don't rejoice because nine toes are fine. If one toe hurts, you feel so painful that you want to die! We should learn to coordinate and complement each other without friction or rivalry. Are we willing to serve each other to strengthen one another? This is why we have programs and ministries in the church.

This long list emphasized the importance of the people to God. Every single name represents a person God knows and loves. Christian faith is all about personal relationships, first to God and then to one another. Programs of the church should always be the means through which we minister to and train people. Apart from programs, if you have a proper ministry mindset, you will seek to relate to others. We need to humbly serve one another instead of being proud and critical. Problems often develop when we cannot get along with

one another in the body of Christ because we only look at our own perspective instead of understanding others.

For example, both the mouth and the hand might consider themselves more important than the other. But if the hand does not work, the mouth cannot eat; if the mouth does not eat, the hand will not have strength to work. Each should value the other.

Some critical people might raise up various complaints against CFC. If you are critical, maybe God is calling you to address the weaknesses of this church. As part of the body, you can develop and strengthen the church. If you see something wrong, it may be related to your gift, so redeem it and be part of the solution.

At CFC, we look at people and develop programs and ministries through the people based on their hearts and gifts. If you complain about an aspect of the church, then we will tell you to start that ministry. Whatever your gift is, use it to serve others in the church, workplace, and family – all the spheres of your life.

Gifts are not just your ability but also your availability. Sometimes you will have to do something you are not good at because it is needed and there is no one else. Serve where you are urgently needed, not only where you are gifted.

### **III. Are you willing to serve God without credit?**

Matthew 6:1

*“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”*

Hebrews 6:10

*For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.*

Most of these names mean nothing to us. Some names are not listed but are grouped together with their families, as in Nehemiah 11:14, where 128 men are unnamed. But these valiant men play no small part in the defense of the city. The church similarly needs many people to function well. CFC would shut down without the faithful many who labor behind the scenes. Hundreds of things happen so we can worship here together with hearts that burn for the LORD and expand God’s kingdom in this community.

Unseen servants are like your vital organs. You never see them but one failure causes trouble. Nehemiah 11:16 lists Levites over the outside work of the temple. Levites were assistants to the priests. While the priests worked inside, the Levites worked outside and received little credit. But if they did not do their work, the priests would be unable to work inside. The same is true of temple servants, listed in Nehemiah 11:21, who were assistants to the Levites. They were not famous or fancy, but they were faithful.

It is the motivation that counts. If we serve to gain esteem and recognition, we will be angry when people do not give us the acclamation we seek. When you are faithful, even if nobody recognizes you, God notices. God saw fit to record these names. They may mean nothing to us, but they mean something to God, which is what ultimately matters.

If you are upset because nobody in the church notices all that you do, your focus is in the wrong place. If you are going to complain, stop serving – there is somebody else who can do

it for the kingdom, and it will not be good for your heart. Of course, my suggestion is to *first* redeem your heart and keep serving instead of stopping.

God records all their names and we know we have the book in eternity that records all of our deeds. If you seek the praise of others, you want to be written in the wrong book. You only need the approval of God. Look to the LORD whom you serve.

Matthew 6:1 is a warning that we will have no reward if we serve to be seen. But Hebrews 6:10 tells us God does not overlook our love *for his name*. The world's headline contains Trump and the Olympics, but heaven's headline contains servants of God and finishers of the kingdom race. Be famous in the kingdom of God, not in this world.

#### **IV. Are you willing to love your community?**

We love together, each person, family, and church in the kingdom of God. When we think about reaching out to the community, we are so geared towards justice work, which is good. But Biblical justice work is much wider than only social justice work. We can learn three things from the entire book of Nehemiah about impacting the community.

##### **A. Responding to need [Nehemiah 1-7]**

In Nehemiah, the people build a wall to respond to Jerusalem's need. This is visible and tangible help for the community.

We started CFC in 1990 to address the biggest need in a community of 40,000 students. We have since added Sunday school, youth group, young adults, and adults and families to the college ministry. Our community outreach has grown.

##### **B. Equipping the church [Nehemiah 8-10]**

In these three chapters, the people gather together as a community of God for revival, worship, and spiritual growth.

##### **C. Proclaiming the Gospel [Nehemiah 11-13]**

Micah 6:8

*He has told you, O man, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Nehemiah 12:43

*And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.*

The Israelites now propagate the name and joy of God in the city and community.

We want to do the same thing in the community of Champaign-Urbana. About 30% of the church is unbelievers, and we want to reach out as much as we can.

These three points comprise the mission statement of SIM, a missions organization I am part of. They meet the needs of people all over the world and equip the churches so they can proclaim the Gospel. This principle can apply anywhere in the world, whether it is in missions fields around the world or in local communities. This is reflected in the book of Nehemiah.

Bible teacher Tony Evans lists ten steps to urban renewal. One of the main steps in reaching out to the community and world is for the church to *become* a community. The church must be a spiritual family of God and a house of faith. Then the community and world will see the church, be attracted by the relationships, and come to know the world.

Micah 6:8, commonly used in social justice ministry, lists three things: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. 'Justice' does not just refer to justice work in the community, but justice among the believers in our normal daily lives for the kingdom of God. Become people of character and integrity, people of God who do the right things to earn credibility from people in the world. Love kindness and help others with integrity and character. Humility comes from our relationship with God. If we live like this, we can be the people that will reach out to this community.

The church needs to impact and influence the community. If CFC did not exist, how many people would know? I believe that we have such holy entanglement with the people and this community that if God pulled us out, it would be known. We want people to recognize members of CFC for being people for having character and integrity, being generous and kind, and being humble.

Nehemiah 12:43 takes place after the dedication of the wall. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away. I pray that this would be the reputation of our church.

## **Conclusion**

[Video remembering victims of Parkland shooting]

My reaction to this video was to love the people where I am. As in the chapter we read, God knew these teens and teachers individually, so we remember their names. Death is ordained to everyone. To some it comes quicker than to others. But life is also ordained to everyone. While we are alive, we are all called to love and care for those around us as long as we are breathing. Each person around us matters to God. So where we live, what we do, and why we do what we do, is important, because He knows the names of everyone around us and He loves them. May we show His love.