

Building a Burden

Rebuild

Nehemiah 1:1-4

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

I asked them about the Jews that survived, those who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem. 3 They replied, "The survivors there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire." 4 When I heard these words I sat down and wept, and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

REFLECTION

We are guided in this new sermon series, *Rebuild*, by the book of Nehemiah. Eighteen months ago, this story of a people whose lives were rebuilt after their whole civilization was decimated would not have been applicable to us. With the disorientation of the last year and a half for us, however, comes unprecedented opportunity. ***As we follow the Biblical concept of rebuilding our lives, habits, and plans, why is it important for us not to go back to the way things were?***

The people of Jerusalem suffered 150 years of systemic disorientation under the reign of the Babylonian empire. King Nebuchadnezzar's army laid siege to the city, destroyed its walls, divided up its citizens and took its leaders to Babylon. Nehemiah, of Jewish heritage but born and raised in Babylon, emerged with a call to rebuild the society of Jerusalem. He begins by naming the pain that he feels through fasting, praying, and mourning. ***How does Nehemiah's deliberate yet patient approach to his calling show us the importance of the behavior of solitude?***

Pastor Andy Stanley describes what happens when we hold out our pain before God. If we can patiently stay in that place, we will be given a *burden*. The burden that God gave Nehemiah to rebuild a wall was the catalyst for transformation. ***This week, see what can emerge when you sit in solitude, name your pain, see what burden God might reveal to you.***

The first few weeks of this series won't focus on to-do lists, but rather on readying ourselves for God's call through the rhythms of solitude, community, and service. We can trust that God's call comes to us not during the stable times of our lives, but during the disorientation. ***Assess your own disorientation as well as the overwhelming need around you this week. What habits of solitude can help you be still and hear God's voice?***

Heavenly Father, thank you for this ancient story which resonates so clearly with us today. Strengthen us through the actions of Nehemiah, give us a burden with a kingdom view of life as we seek to rebuild. Amen