

Courage for Renewal
Selected Scriptures from Nehemiah
Bethany Assembly of God
11/15/2020

- Share a time when you received some devastating or disappointing news. How did you react? Was your reaction anything like Nehemiah's?

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah 1:4

- Why was Nehemiah so devastated by this news? He had apparently never even been to Jerusalem. What was it to him?
- Read Nehemiah 1:8-9. This is a description of what the story of Nehemiah is all about. How did Nehemiah react to this promise?

Big Idea: You need courage for renewal.

- Why does renewing some things take courage? Why did Nehemiah's renewal project take courage?

1. Renewal through rebuilding: you should be committed to God's glory and concerned for His people.

- It had been over 140 years since Jerusalem was destroyed and the wall still lay in ruins. Why didn't Nehemiah just move on with his comfortable life in Babylon?

And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments..."

Nehemiah 1:5

- What's a covenant? What were the two parts of the covenant that Nehemiah was concerned about?

Nehemiah saw that God's glory and blessing for Israel were tied together. As long as the wall of Jerusalem lay in ruins, it was a shame for Israel and therefore, a reflection on Israel's God. And as long as the wall lay in ruins, the Jews in the land were exposed to their enemies'

attacks and could not be organized in their government. He wanted to rebuild for God's glory and the good of God's people.

- There may not be literal walls lying in ruin, but are there places in your area of influence where God is not glorified or His people are not blessed? Have you been concerned for it?

2. Renewal through risk: you should be willing to do risky things for God's glory.

- If you can, watch the trailer of *Free Solo*, the documentary about Alex Honnold's free solo climb up El Capitan. (You can navigate here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urRVZ4SW7WU> or scan the QR code.)



- Is the primary goal of life maximizing your lifespan? Why or why not? What did Jesus have to say about that? (read Mark 8:35).
- What kinds of risks did Nehemiah take? Check out Nehemiah 2:1-2; 4:7-9; 4:15-16 for some ideas.
- What kinds of risks might come with renewal in your life or in our church? Are those risks worth it? Why?

3. Renewal through resolve: you should keep the vision in front of you.

- What's the difference between risk and resolve?
- What drove Nehemiah's resolve?
- Do you have a vision or are you involved in a God-given vision? What is it? I'm not just asking about personal aspirations but something God wants to accomplish through you.

At Bethany, our vision is renewal to prepare for an overflow of God's presence in the Pioneer Valley and around the world. We're renewing hunger: our desire for God's presence in our lives. Heart: our commitment to His mission of making disciples from every nation. Hope: a faithful expectation that the best is yet to come. And Hospitality: our ability and resourcefulness to welcome people into our church and into the family of God.

- How are you participating in that vision?

I am doing a great work and cannot come down.

Nehemiah 6:3

4. Renewal through repentance: renewal requires a change of heart and behavior.

- Renewal isn't primarily about the exterior, though it will change those things; it starts in the heart. Why do you think lasting renewal that glorifies God and blesses His people requires heart change?
- What is repentance? What comes to mind when you hear someone say "Repent"?
- Read Nehemiah 8:10. Is the purpose of repentance to feel sorry? What should repentance produce?
- Is there a need for the renewal of repentance in your life? If you've recognized some areas where renewal is needed, do you need to start with the spiritual act of confession and seeking the Holy Spirit's help?

Conclusion

- Renewal means change. It doesn't necessarily mean making something look exactly as it did before, but restoring it to its purpose. In what ways are you participating in the renewal happening at Bethany? Are you invested in it beginning with your heart?
- What are some areas God is calling you to renew in your life?