

Rise Up & Build - Nehemiah 2:17-18, Exodus 35:4-20
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

On a practical level, it just seems like simple math. For a church to build a building like we are at this moment, it requires the financial sacrifice from the people. Generally, we can't build and furnish a building if we do not raise sufficient funds to make that happen. So we do a fund-raiser asking people to be generous toward this goal. The church does it, other not-for-profits do this as well. So we seek out the best ways to motivate our people using emotion and even guilt to get people to reach deep in their pockets to give (can you say cute puppies). And of course, add religion to it, making people have a sense that their acceptance before God is dependent on how much they give. So giving becomes something like Valentine's Day for so many men, the chance to prove your love by making sure your gift is thoughtful and large enough to make up for all the other days of mistakes.

Yet, when we search the Scriptures and find moments when the spiritual leaders of God's people invite them to give to something special, although over and above, we find a very different message. Let's start with the first premise, that we, or God needs your gift in order to accomplish His plan. The truth is, God does not need us for anything. He doesn't need this building to accomplish His glorious purpose, and His mission is not dependent on our participation. If He wanted to God could let us find oil or gold in the field we bought or have a Cardinal player join our church and tithe on a \$30 million a year salary. No building is difficult for the Creator of the universe. On the other hand, we do see several moments in Scripture where the leaders of God invite the people of God to give generously to something above and beyond their normal tithes and offerings. The people are invited to give generously toward the building of the Tabernacle in our text this week, and later to the building of the Temple by David. Nehemiah gives the plea to all of God's people in the wall rebuild project he leads. In the New Testament book of Acts we see the people of God taking radical acts to care for the community of faith, some going as far as selling off pieces of land and other possessions to make sure the church cares for the needs of the body. Paul spends much of his third missionary journey taking a special offering for the starving and persecuted church in Jerusalem. He asks the Gentile churches in Greece to give generously and above their normal offerings so that they can love their hurting brothers and sisters in the Lord. And the book of Romans, the book that in many ways is the richest and deepest theological work in the Scriptures is actually a missionary fund raising letter, as Paul is asking this church to finance and support with people his mission to Spain.

Here's the point, in all these cases the people of God are called to corporately give sacrificially and generously. But the motivation for giving is never that God needs their money to accomplish His plan. It is actually just the opposite. God is inviting His people to join Him in what He is already doing, and their participation is for their joy, His glory, and the advance of the Gospel. In other words, we don't give to prove to God how much we love Him. We give because He has already given so much to us, but even more important, the glorious God of the universe invites us to give as a way to join Him in His purpose and mission. Therefore, our giving joins the miracle of grace. In Exodus 35 we see God through Moses ushering a call for people to give to the building of this Tabernacle and for all of the furnishings for worship in this huge and glorious tent. This tent will be the place where God meets with His people, atones for their sin in sacrifice, and comes near for their worship. He doesn't need a tent to do these things, but the invitation to give invites them to join in the story, and they collectively (all of them) do this. The outcome is that they give so much that there is a point in chapter 36 where Moses tells the people to stop giving. That is grace-based generosity. In Nehemiah the whole community is invited to bring their skills and resources to the wall rebuild project. The result is every family finds their place on the

wall, a sword in one hand and trowel in the other. Miraculously, the people rebuild walls that had been toppled for 140 or so years in 52 days. In both (and really all of the cases mentioned) the unity and generosity of giving through God's people ends in miraculous stories revealing the glory of God. So now it is our time, our opportunity to join the story. Our banquet is today. Our message is not a test of love, rather, we believe God has made it clear to us. Now is the time. So we are inviting our families to find their place on the wall and join the story. It is an invitation from God to join Him in what He is already doing. Yet, He has chosen to include us in His mission and purpose, and when we join in it is always for our joy, God's glory, and the advance of the Gospel to the nations!

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Acts 8 | Acts 9 | Acts 10 | Acts 11 | Acts 12 | Acts 13 | Acts 14 |

Reading from this past week: Nehemiah 2, Exodus 35

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 1:1-5

Family Worship

Song - *O Church Arise*

<https://youtu.be/A98YQHG8tLY>

Gospel Project

Unit: Away from the land

Story: Moses disobeyed God

Big Picture Question: What is God like?

Answer: God is holy, good, and loving.

Scripture: Numbers 20

New City Catechism

Question #7: What does the Law of God require?

Answer: That we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Verse: Matthew 22:37-40

Scripture

Exodus 35:4-20

- If God owns everything, why would He choose to ask His people to give generously when they were to build the Tabernacle? What are some things beyond the building of walls that God accomplishes in His people in events such as this?
- What are some ways people give financially in the story? What are some ways that they give things that are not financial in the story?
- Let us encourage you as families to discuss with your children the process you are taking to determine how your family will join in God's mission through Rise Up & Build.
- How is our Rise Up & Build campaign an invitation from God to join Him in His purpose and mission?

Prayer

*Pray that God would stir the hearts of all of our people so that they would commit their freewill offerings toward the building and that God would meet our needs through His people.

*Spend time praying together with your family about how you will be a part of the Rise Up & Build campaign.