



Series: *building a city for god* (Nehemiah)

The Vision of our Church

By Matthew Black
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Midweek Service
Text: Nehemiah 11

“the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 11:2)

Introduction: We come to Nehemiah 11. Remember it has been 141 years since Jerusalem was destroyed, and in 52 days, the walls of Jerusalem were completed. In Neh. 11, the people are organized into a community within the walls of the city. That’s the main thing that happens. The entire rest of the chapter tells us how they functioned as a worship center, and the people that lived outside the walls of Jerusalem.

The establishment of Jerusalem into a functioning place of worship is identical to the Lord’s plan for the local church in the New Testament.

The message tonight has three main focus points. I don’t want you to try to get every detail I want you to see the overall goal of our church and to see the road to get there.

The goal and vision of our church is to produce godly mature believers in Christ who are mentoring others.

I want you to write down three words on your paper. Community. Maturity. Ministry.

I. Let’s look first at **Community** (1-9). Our church community or fellowship is based on **KNOWING Christ** –

Why do we come to church? We want to fellowship in Christ. We have a community of people who’s purpose in life is to worship Christ and to do whatever pleases Him.

We read about another community in Nehemiah 11:1-2. This was a community of people that was re-establishing a worship center in Jerusalem in **verses 1-2**, “And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. 2 And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.”

It is estimated that there were about a million people in the area, and one-tenth moved into the city. That’s 100,000 people! Loving God and loving people are the glue to keep any church together.

What do we learn from this? The Christian life is not just a matter of “believing”. It is a matter of “belonging”.

Example: If we want community we have to have ONE thing in common. We need to be constantly looking up to the Lord. The fact that we are all sinners saved by God’s grace is what we have in common.

In almost every other way, we are all very different. I don’t know of a small church that is as diverse as ours, and for that we are going to have many challenges. We need to learn to respect, love, and accept one another as the Bible commands us. We also need to keep LOOKING UP. The one thing we have in common is that we KNOW Christ.

We want to be God’s holy city! We need to be looking up, remembering our identity and purpose. This draws us together and makes us **tighter!**

Warning: Let us make sure we don't get what someone has called "koinonitus" – We want koinokia, (the Greek word for "fellowship"). We want fellowship around Christ. But we don't want to so close knit that outside people do not feel they can break through and become a part of our fellowship. The only requirement for membership into God's family is repentant faith in Christ. That is the focus of our fellowship.

Application: Ask yourself...

1. How can I help the person next to me get closer to God?
2. How can I get closer to the people in my church?
3. How can I make people from the outside see their need for Christ and feel welcome in our community?

Example: Remember, Jesus commended one of the Scribes for his humble manner in **Mark 12:34**, "when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The Scribe's heart was being moved, not just his intellect. There are many of these people that God is drawing all around us. What can we do to bring them to Jesus Christ?

II. **Maturity** (10-24) by **GROWING in Christ** - Looking inward! This makes us **deeper!** Six elements of maturity we gain from this passage. We are not only a community that is KNOWING Christ. We need to be GROWING in Christ. We want to become spiritually mature people. This is part of the vision of Tabernacle. Are you growing in Christ?

Remember **Ephesians 4:11-13**, "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ".

There are six areas of spiritual leadership that are mentioned in the ministry of the Temple. These are all things that were meant to ground the people, to make them deeper.

Spiritual growth is not magical once you are born again. It takes commitment and work. Spiritual growth and maturity is not just for a select few. It is for every Christian. Spiritual growth does not occur instantly, but it is a process over time. Spiritual growth is not measured by what you know, but by who you are. **James 3:13**, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom".

We come across several ways we can grow that are represented by the functions that the people had that we read about in **verses 10-24**. We first find that...

1. **We can grow through good Teaching:** Those who worked inside the Temple (vs. 10-14). **Verses 11-12**, "Seraiah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, was the ruler of the house of God. ¹² And their brethren that did the work of the house [TEMPLE] were eight hundred twenty and two".

This work was the teaching of the Word of God and the worship of the temple.

Application: Are you committed to the teaching times of the local church? Do you know others that are perhaps not committed? Have you spoken with them? Are you actively

listening to the Word, trying to apply it to your life? Are you studying the Word on your own? Without the application of the teaching to your life, you cannot grow.

2. **We can grow through Discipleship:** Those who worked outside the Temple (vs. 15-16). **Verses 15-16**, "Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni; ¹⁶ And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God." Spiritual growth is not a private matter. It involves what goes on OUTSIDE the Temple!

One commentator said this: "... 'outside work' didn't...mean those who landscaped the temple grounds. ...[It] refers to leaders who worked outside the house of God, those who judged, handled civil affairs, and counseled and ministered to the public outside the place of worship".

In other words, there were people in Jerusalem that were counseling, mentoring, and helping people know how to apply God's Word to their life. Is there a verse in the Bible that tells us we are to do that?

1. "Instruct one another" (Rom. 15:14)
2. "Teach one another" (Col. 3:16)
3. "Admonish one another" (Col. 3:16)
4. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19)
5. "Build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11)

Application: Spiritual growth is not a personal private matter. Do you have a tender heart toward those that are admonishing you? Only teachable, tender people grow!

3. **We can grow through Worship** - Prayer & Praise Leaders: The prayer warriors are found in verses 17-19, "And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. ¹⁸ All the Levites in the holy city were two hundred fourscore and four [284]."

How is your devotional life? Our time of corporate thanksgiving is only the overflow of your personal relationship with Christ. If you come to Sunday or Wednesday and you are cold, it's likely that you are backsliding in your walk with God during the week. If you are not growing, you are shrinking! There is no neutral ground in the Christian life.

4. **We can grow through Oversight** (vs. 19) – **Verse 19**, "Moreover the porters [gatekeepers], Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, were an hundred seventy and two." Spiritual growth is not measured by what you know, but by who you are. Are you applying oversight to your life?

Explanation: These were the gatekeepers or watchmen. They protected Jerusalem from the enemies. Do you have gatekeepers in your life? Are you staying pure? If you have cable TV or internet do you have rules set up to guard your eyes? If not you will not grow.

Application: If you have been falling into useless or harmful entertainment, your action item for today is to go home and deprogram you TV. Jesus said, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰ And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (**Matthew 5:29-30**).

5. **We can grow through godly Music:** Asaph and the singers (vs. 22-24). **Verses 22b-23**, "Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were over the business of the house of God. 23 For it was the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day".

Music in the church is very important.

Music is very important for the Christian life. Sometimes the Word of God can cut the heart, not just in reading it, but in listening to it in song. God knew this and commanded us to listen to music that can teach us and help us grow.

Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." You need to be listening to godly music that lifts your soul to heaven on a regular basis.

Application: Consider all of the above activities as food. If we are an army of soldiers, doing all of the above is like eating in the mess hall. You cannot judge a church by how they chow down in the mess hall! You judge a church by how they fight on the front lines! That's where we come to our final point.

III. **Ministry / Missions** (25-36) by **GOING** for Christ - Looking outward!

Verses 25-26 tell of all the people outside the gates of Jerusalem in all the towns and villages. They don't live in the city of worship. All of the people inside the gates of Jerusalem knew they had a special place of ministry to the rest of the villages and towns across Israel.

Explanation: Spiritual maturity is not the goal. We want to **GROW** so that we can **GO** and tell others! To say that spiritual maturity is an end in and of itself is a myth. In becoming like Christ, we are called to multiplication which is seen in the Great Commission. We need to have a commitment to the people outside the walls!

Application: We are called to minister to one another (edification) and to those outside (evangelism). A non-ministering Christian is a contradiction in terms.

It is not enough to know the Bible, but to practice the Bible. Apply it to your life and then **teach** and **mentor** it to others. Someone said, "The only part of the Bible you believe is the part you practice!" So true! We want doers of the Word, not hearers only.

Conclusion: Applications...

1. Have you ever been critical of a ministry of the church? Have you though something could be done better. Would you do me a favor? Would you write down the areas of this church that need work, and how you are going to plug in and change them?
2. Second, do you see folk attending TBC that aren't members? Can you go out of your way to befriend them and even start a Bible study with them? If you need a Bible study, I have our beginners Bible course.