

NEHEMIAH 2:9-20

A. Introduction

1. Three reasons why Nehemiah is a relevant book for us to be spending time in at our elder's meetings:

It is a book about building a community of people who will reach the community around them.

It is a book about God's provision for His people as they wait for King Jesus to come.

It is a book that will be helpful for us as we think about as we approach 10 years since the formation of Banstead Community Church.

2. So far we've seen that what this local church and this community needs are:

People who weep.

People who pray.

People who work.

People who take opportunities.

People who plan.

3. God's provision for His people so they can remain faithful as they wait for Jesus to come are elders of local churches who do these things.

This is what God wants us to be as a group of elders.

What else do we learn?

B. We need to be people who pause

1. Nehemiah sets off and arrives in Jerusalem.

He gets a military escort.

"So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me." (Nehemiah 2:9)

He arouses the attention of God's enemies.

"When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites." (Nehemiah 2:10)

He eventually arrives in Jerusalem.

"I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days." (Nehemiah 2:11)

2. What does Nehemiah do when he arrives in Jerusalem?

For 3 days – nothing.

"I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days." (Nehemiah 2:11)

He pauses.

He doesn't rush in head first. He stops. He rests.

During these three days he would have been praying, reading Scripture, thinking through his plan, resting his body so he is ready for the work ahead.

By pausing, he allows all this to happen.

3. Application.

I think the "pause" is something important for us as elders to do.

In leading the sheep: pause before going ahead with a plan of action.

In caring for the sheep: pause before writing a response to an email; speaking to that person etc.

C. We need to be people who investigate

1. After 3 days Nehemiah does a rigorous investigation of the situation in Jerusalem.

"I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on.

By night I went out through the Valley Gate towards the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire. Then I moved on towards the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through; so I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the Valley Gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work." (Nehemiah 2:11-16)

He investigates the community.

He goes walking around the city – what kind of condition are things really in.

He wants to check that his plan was effective before getting started – which is why he doesn't say anything to anyone; he wants to double check the plan first.

2. Application.

How well do we know our local church? How well do we know our community?

What are its needs? Who is coming in and who is leaving? Who is not being reached? Who is not being care for? Where are people gathering? What do people believe?

D. We need to be people who lead

"Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in; Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work." (Nehemiah 2:17-18)

1. Once he has finished checking out the city he gets the people together to outline his plan of action.

He tells them a story and gives them a vision of what the future could be like.

The people respond by getting behind it.

2. Application.

In our time together as elders we should be planning, investigating, reassessing, clarifying the details.

If we have done this first part well, then when we call the whole church together, at church meetings, we should be able to outline plans for them to get behind and get involved in doing.

E. We need to be people who endure discouragement

1. Nehemiah refused to be discouraged.

“But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us, “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?” (Nehemiah 2:19)

He was mocked.

He was misrepresented.

But he refused to be discouraged.

I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.” (Nehemiah 2:20)

2. Application.

It is inevitable that times of discouragement will come our way.

Discouragement can come in a variety of different ways.

But if the hand of God is upon us, we can endure this discouragement, knowing that we are doing the Lord’s will and work, and this will enable us to keep doing what God calls us to do.