

Building Hope beyond Walls
By building what matters to God
Nehemiah 7

We are Building Hope Beyond Walls

It never was just about building and expanding facilities. Much broader in scope.

Capital Initiative (Capital means above and beyond General/Operating funds) - 3 parts:

1. Expand facilities and ministry – 90%
2. Church Planting- 8%
3. Missions- Regional/Global – 2%

Fundraising began in March 2019 for 3years; expanded in 2022; 2 more years to March 2024 (called Resurrender). Formal fundraising ends in March; but you are still welcome to contribute. **IF contributing on auto pay, will need to STOP the autopay.** The more funds raised; the less mortgage payment.

Results

- **Initial Goal was to raise 1.1 M; + 300K (Resurrender)**
- **Total Contributions received to date: 1.5 million!!! (another 100K in seed money and interest) 1.6 million total**

Progress to-date:

Building Hope through expanding and improving facilities

1. Architectural and engineering studies
2. Site Plan and site plan approval
3. Barn demo and site clearance
4. Door and window improvements to Cove and Kid's Ministry
5. Added additional storage
6. Patio and picnic tables
7. Playlot for kids of all ages
8. Lighting and safety improvements

Building Hope through church Planting

1. Partnered with MCC and planted Radiant Covenant Church

Building Hope by partnering with Missions

1. Egypt – combat trafficking - furnishings
2. North Dakota Covenant church plant- sound equipment
3. Germany – evangelism
4. Mexico missions – Yugo home building with CG youth!

What's Next for 2024?

- 1. Priority! Must take care of the property and facilities entrusted to us.** Our facilities are over 25 years old, getting dowdy and worn. Updates are needed.
- 2. Must build and expand for present and future ministry needs.**
- 3. Will continue to pray and search for church planting and mission opportunities.**

- Complete design work, floor plans and construction documents for a new sanctuary
- Demo office
- Add suitable modular for office and meeting
- Build multiuse ball court and outside lighting for youth
- Kitchen improvements that complement our Hospitality Ministry
- Seal and paint exterior of building and some interior painting

Site plan, floor plans and color boards are on display in the sanctuary... we are available for questions at the conclusion of the service.

- *Prayer*

Building Hope Beyond Walls

Hook (5 min)

Building Hope beyond walls - what really matters to God - draw insights from Nehemiah
Let's talk about building projects and project management- How many PM's out there??
Really? How many of you have remodeled your house? How many have painted a wall? Planted in the garden? Redecorated room? Installed appliances? Tune up for a car? All ARE projects.
And yes, you were the project manager.

Regarding said projects; how many of those projects ended up the way you envisioned? How many of them resulted in a change in scope, mission drift, going sideways, upside down OR went a totally different direction? Many of us can relate to that.

Story of wheelbarrow renovation project

Slide: picture of wheelbarrow with kids

Slide: picture of wheelbarrow with plants

Everyone gets the opportunity to be project manager in their life. The project doesn't always go according to plan. But what really matters to God? Let's revisit what happened with the Covenant Grove with Building Hope Expansion Plan project:

In 2020, we had plans in hand for expanding this sanctuary to 400 seats and adding a next-gen addition, at the time we were experiencing a weekly attendance of about 400. Plans looked like this (SLIDE of expansion) Covid hit, construction prices went through the roof, and we started meeting in a tent in the parking lot. Can't do a 4-million project and don't really need to with only 200 people attending. Went back to the drawing board, simpler construction, scaled down to 285 sanctuary and here it is (SLIDE of expansion) much different than the original, but better suited for our mission and future.

So, when do we build??? I have some insights on this but let me first give you a biblical perspective. The most renowned project manager in the Bible is a man named Nehemiah.

For the last four years I've been giving sermons or sermonettes highlighting Nehemiah and his project of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem and connecting those insights with our Building Hope Initiative. The book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament has a gold mine of wisdom and insights on project management and leadership still relevant today. Let's review:

The Project Manager Nehemiah

Nehemiah 1:1-5

In late autumn, in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign (446 BC),^a I was at the fortress of Susa (Persia, modern day Iran) ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem.

³They said to me, "Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire."

⁴When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I **mourned, fasted, and prayed** to the God of heaven.

Passion – Prayer – Planning – Participation

God used one man's **Passion** to rebuild a wall that have been neglected by others for over 150 years –

An intense lifestyle of **Prayer**. Nehemiah prayed for months before he acted. **Prayer Moves us to the very heart of God. Then we move into action** on God's Plan.

In chapter 1-2 we garner great insights about how to do **Planning and project management** from Nehemiah's meticulous planning and inspection and on-site inspection and evaluation. The King granted his request to return and build the wall and gave him all the materials and resources to accomplish it.

In Chapter 3, the whole chapter is dedicated to listing all the families and individuals who built the wall! **All** the people **participated**, used their different gifts, skills and skill levels and worked together.

Nehemiah's leadership abilities with God's blessing navigated this project to completion through all the trials like supply chain issues, transportation, opposition, criticism, labor rebellion and local injustice. As documented in chapters 4-7. His **Persistence** and practice of **Prayer** is paramount in his character. All sermon worthy material.

Chapter 6 V.15 So on October 2^o the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. 16 When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated (evangelism!) They realized this work had been done with **the help of our God.**

After decades of neglect, months of prayer and preparation, Nehemiah led the community wall building project around the whole City of Jerusalem and did it in 52 days. How **big is this wall** anyway? Finished height 39' width 8' length 13,200' (2.5 miles)!!!

Building Hope beyond walls *-by building what matters to God*

BUT it really wasn't about the wall – really. What Nehemiah probably did not see coming is the fact that this project was becoming something much bigger and different than rebuilding the wall. Rebuilding the wall was just the **beginning** of his mission; but NOT THE MISSION. Chapters 1-6 chronicle the restoration of the wall; Chapter 7 begins the restoration of God's people.

Our cove windows, playground and picnic tables had a common purpose – to create opportunities for people of all generations to gather and fellowship. They are INVITING!

His mission would become restoring true worship among God's people and through that restoring **HOPE** and being the **light** for the community and the nations. This is what matters to God. We are going to uncover three things that really matter to God in Chapter 7 beyond building walls.

Nehemiah 7:1-4

1After the wall was finished and I had set up the doors in the gates, the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites were appointed. 2I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah, the commander of the fortress, for he was a **faithful** man who **feared God** more than most. 3I said to them, "Do not leave the gates open during the hottest part of the day.^a And even while the **gatekeepers** are on duty, have them shut and bar the doors. Appoint the residents of Jerusalem to act as guards, everyone on a regular watch. Some will serve at sentry posts and some in front of their own homes."

I. **Worship matters to God**– true worship (Chapter 8)

The singers and the Levites were there to lead the people in worship; Walls were rebuilt, now true worship had to be rebuilt as a unified people of God

True worship – want a picture, read Chapter 8 after the Book of the Law was read aloud...

In October,^a when the Israelites had settled in their towns, 1**all the people assembled** with a **unified purpose** at the square just inside the Water Gate. They asked Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had given for Israel to obey.

2So on October 8^b Ezra the priest brought the Book of the Law before the assembly, which included the men and women and all the children old enough to understand. 3He faced the square just inside the Water Gate from early morning until noon and **read aloud to everyone who could understand. All the people listened** closely to the Book of the Law.

5Then **Ezra praised** the LORD, the great God, and **all the people** chanted, "Amen! Amen!" as they **lifted their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD** with their faces to the ground.

8They read from the Book of the Law of God and **clearly explained the meaning** of what was being read, **helping the people understand** each passage.

10And Nehemiah^c continued, "Go and **celebrate with a feast** of rich foods and sweet drinks, and **share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared.** This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!"

2. Character matters to God; faithfulness and fear of God

v.2 I gave the charge of Jerusalem: Time for Nehemiah to delegate and move on to God's next assignment.

Hanani: This was Nehemiah's brother, and the one who first told him about the sad state of affairs in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:2). His initiative and concern made him well qualified to govern.

He was a faithful man and feared God more than many: This described **Hananiah**, who was the co-leader of Jerusalem. This is a characteristic in a man and woman that matters to God.

Many people who don't seem to be specially gifted – they can't sing, they can't remember many Bible verses, they don't have a knack for teaching, and so forth – can still be used greatly of God if they are faithful and fear God. On the other hand, many remarkably gifted people may see little fruit in serving God if they are not faithful and do not fear God.

3. People matter to God- invite and pursue

Perhaps the end of a long day, walking along the wall and up in one of the tall parapets looking out over the countryside. It hits him...

4 Now the city was large and spacious, but there were **few people in it**, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt. 5 So **my God put it into my heart** to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. NIV

WHAT? We built this thing, this huge great wall but nobody came - they are all out there!!! Why are they still out there?? Why don't they move in? Only a few had moved in, but 10's of thousands remained in the outskirts and countryside.

Verse 5- MY GOD GAVE ME THE IDEA... PUT IT IN MY HEART. This is what happens when people are in prayer. Prayer – THEN action.

HE GAVE THEM EACH AN **INVITATION** = First the LEADERS, by registration over 42,000; then the rest were volunteers. The power of invitation.

Walk with me up to the top of our faux tower and look around. Around in all directions past the immediate almond trees and cows, what do you see??? Homes; hundreds of homes already built, hundreds more under construction and hundreds more in plan stage.

Slide – Aerial photo

Covenant Grove – planted in a recession and relocated to this 11.5-acre property in 2015. Area east of Oakdale road – over 50,000 people with little to no church presence. 5 churches in this same area closed; we occupy one of them.

God has given us 11.5 acres of land, existing facilities, a plan to expand FACILITIES AND MINISTRY but the PEOPLE ARE OUT THERE!

Maybe they are waiting for an INVITATION from you and me. Have you noticed that Jack gives an invitation almost every week when he preaches. This is part of our plan. We believe that the people surrounding us need Jesus now more than ever and we are going to offer an invitation to them as many times as possible.

Jesus said you will be my witnesses in Judea, Samaria... So let's be witnesses in Modesto, Riverbank, Oakdale and the surrounding countryside.
We are His witnesses; His messengers. His welcomers.

What ideas God has given you to invite your community? What has God **laid on your heart?** You know people out in the wilderness, outside any support system or protection; unsure if they will survive the next wave of whatever. These are your family, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, the ones who slap your hamburgers and taco together... they are waiting for an invitation... from you and ME. Your pastoral staff will be working with you over the next few months too... But more than anything we invite you to unleash the PASSION God has already given you to go and invite and be witnesses.

We are Building Hope beyond walls by building what matters to God.

Worship matters
Character matters
People matter

Let us begin to rebuild the walls of our community!

Building Hope beyond walls by building what matters to God

- *Worship matters*
- *Character matters*
- *People matter*

“What has GOD laid on your heart to invite your community?”