

Sermon Series: Hand Me Another Brick—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—4/3/2005

Title: “Laying the Foundation on Your Knees”

Text: Nehemiah 11: 1-11

Intro.: *Ills.: Now That’s a Prayer* (Bruce Almighty film clip)

Theme: Before we launch into the significant tasks of our lives, we can and should begin with a prayerful timeout, fully confident that God wants to hear us for Jesus’ sake and already has a planned mapped out to help us to succeed.

Background on Nehemiah, the great builder, and his times

- Israel completing a 70 exile in Babylon
 2. People of God scattered and distressed (**Print 11: 2-3a**)
 3. Jerusalem is broken down (**Print 11: 3b**)
 4. Often when we are in greatest need or stressed the most is when we need to be committing more time to prayer
- Nehemiah, a leader of men and a chosen leader of God
 5. Valued by the King (*Now I was the cupbearer of the King— Print vs. 1, 11b*)—trusted protector/taster and advisor
 6. Sought by fellow Jews who knew as giant of the faith and prayer had a regular “line open” to God
 7. **Ills.: is your e-mail (prayer line) always on**
- Nehemiah a giant in prayer
 8. 9 times in the book Nehemiah recorded as praying (beginning new endeavor, opposition, hindrance, confess, revival)
 9. “stops and drops” at a moment’s notice “*I have to pray about that*”
 10. Prayer should not be the auxiliary to our capital building project but the actual foundation we are laying for building

The prayerful art of laying foundations of our lives

- Commit a set time to pray (**Print vs 11: 4**)
 11. Nehemiah was not too busy with the crisis to pray
 1. Notice that he was real and honest before God
 2. Sometimes we have to humble ourselves and admit that we “can’t do it” and let God be the God of our plan/life
 12. Our prayer emphasis will involve setting aside time to pray (prayer walk, daily prayer devotional journal, partners)
- Begin with your relationship—not the issue (**Print vs. 11: 5**)
 13. Nehemiah went back to God’s promise (covenant)-- not rely on giving a fickle promise for him and countrymen
 14. Instead of relying on God to help us with this capital building program, we rely on him to get it done
 1. *When God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater on whom to base his oath, he based it on himself... God did this so that we would be encouraged. God cannot lie when he takes an oath or makes a promise. These two things can never be changed. Those of us who have taken refuge in him hold on to the confidence we have been given. Heb 13: 13,18*
 2. **Ills.: Steve Nation’s comment on expecting mountains to move and buildings to rise by prayer**
- Get outside of yourself and pray for others (**Print 11: 6a**)
 15. Nehemiah did not just pray for himself as prepared to take on big project but for his countrymen’s spiritual life
 16. Our prayer walk, praying for the reach of Christ into all the homes/families, more important than building itself
 17. **Ills.: God’s Method**
- Clear the decks of sin’s wreckage (**Print 11: 6b-9**)
 18. Nehemiah knew that even at that late date countrymen violated God’s will (the what and why)
 1. Most refused to go back to Jerusalem after 70+years because had assimilated and had the “good life” going

- 2. Not only lost their integrity as God's people but had taken their eye off the promised hope of a Savior
- 19. Confessing and reconciling sins in personal, family, and congregational life if we are to expect God's blessing
- 20. Being confident that we are forgiven for the sake of our Risen Savior
- Do a little identity check (**Print 11: 10**)
- 21. God is the one who is our focus, our joy, our resource, our hope, our Builder, our Savior, our God
- 22. We are servants, God's chosen people doing God's work, redeemed in effort, able to do more than we dream by Him
- 23. Praying that God would give us clear sight to recognize this on a daily basis
- Demand nothing but expect everything (**Print 11: 11a**)
- 24. Nehemiah was spiritually discerning enough to know that it wasn't about him but about God's glory ("revere")
- 25. We have not human right to demand anything of God but we have the rights of sons and daughters through faith in Jesus to expect everything from God's resources for our building effort— *so pray like a son or daughter*

Now That's a Prayer (Bruce Almighty)

"Now that's a prayer," God says. "I'm going to get right on it." Elapsed time: 01:26:53 to 01:29:04 (DVD scene 18)

Citation: Bruce Almighty, (Universal, 2003), directed and produced by Tom Shadyac, written by Steve Kornen and Mark O'Keef; submitted by Bill White, Paramount, California

God's Method

We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.... hat the church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but man—men of prayer. **Citation: E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer***

Neh. 1:1-11

¹The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, *in* the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capitol, ²that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped *and* had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. ³They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, ^{3b} and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire." ⁴When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵I said, "I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and mercy for those who love Him and keep His commandments, ^{6a}let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants ^{6b} confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷"We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. ⁸"Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; ⁹but *if* you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.'

¹⁰"They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand.

^{11a}"O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man."

^{11b} Now I was the cupbearer to the king.