

Rise And Build Part 5

This is an exciting day as we have the opportunity to sow into our Rise and Build Campaign. I am anxious to see what happens today and I am excited to see what the harvest will be like in our church and in our life as we give. This is giving above and beyond our regular tithes and offerings. There is a blessing attached to paying tithes. The Lord said he would open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing and rebuke the devourer for our sakes. But there is also a blessing attached to this kind of above and beyond giving. I believe there is a spiritual release and blessing that comes when God's people exercise their faith to give.

There have been several people who have been instrumental in my life in terms of giving. E.M. Clark was one. Another was a missionary who came to our church many years ago named Wayne Myers. His book, *Living Beyond the Possible ... Wayne Myers* will challenge you to be a giver in every aspect of your life. Let me read a paragraph from the introduction to his book. He speaks about living to give. "The pattern began with Jesus (who gave everything that he had) and the early church (who sold their possessions and gave the money to expand the kingdom). The early Christians knew their possessions were not their own. Everything we have is from God, the Giver. Many years ago Martha and I determined we would give a monetary gift on an average of every day of the 365 days of a year. Some days it's not very much. Other days it may be a large check. Whatever we have, we give accordingly. Some people say, 'Wayne, you can't live like that. You'll go broke.' And I tell them, 'Listen, I was broke when I started giving. I haven't been broke since.' Not many people understand the joy that comes from living a life of giving. Once you start this walk, you're hooked for life." Bro. Myers told me once, "Give cause you can't help it and then you'll get because you can't stop it." He said giving will add contagious joy to your life because Jesus said it was more blessed to give than to receive. He told me that giving will break the fear of tomorrow and the fear of lack from your life because giving will guarantee daily bread for food and seed for sowing.

The apostle Paul wrote, **"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."** Jesus said with the measure we give it will be given back to us, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. If we sow generously we reap generously. Notice the Scripture says we are to give what we have decided in our heart to give.

No one is under compulsion to give. No one is watching to see if you give today. But I am eager for everyone to give because I believe God will bless you as you give. Paul continues, **“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work...Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-11** I believe when we give to the work of the Lord, our tithes, our offerings, to missions, and even to the building fund, God will make his grace abound and supply bread for us to eat and also supply more seed so we can continue to give and be generous. I believe as we have faith and give today, God will increase our faith to believe for even greater things in every aspect of our lives. I believe he will bless this church with a greater harvest and in new harvest fields, as we give in obedience and faith. That’s why I’m excited to give today. Dr. Clark told me the sooner we plant the seed, the sooner we reap the harvest, so I’m ready to give. But first, turn to Nehemiah. I want to look at a couple of things in the why and how of the rebuilding process that I believe are important for us to consider as we prepare to give.

We’ve talked in the past weeks about why Nehemiah was encouraging the people to rebuild the walls. They had been destroyed 150 years before by Nebuchadnezzar and the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins. He said, **“Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.” Nehemiah 2:17** They were building to remove the disgrace of the past. We aren’t building because of disgrace. They were building in part to overcome their past. I’m thankful to God we aren’t having to change our look or our name or our location because of scandal or failure in our past or our present. For more than 80 years CAG has served the community, the city and the kingdom faithfully. Thanks be to God. There is no disgrace, but there is age. Sixteen years ago we moved back in after the tornado with new facilities, but the sanctuary, this part of the facility, from the outside looks like it did 50 years ago when we moved here. Our age is starting to show and it’s time for a little work to be done, for a new look, a step forward, taking the next step in the master plan. **We aren’t trying to overcome our past, we are simply trying to better live in the present and prepare for the future.** If you are fifty years old then you know what I’m talking about. Live healthy in the present and prepare for the future. It’s time to rise and build.

I drove around the neighborhood this week and looked at a couple of other churches. I saw the decline that happens in buildings and too often in congregations. We have to stay current, we have to build, we have to grow. Most importantly, we have to obey the Lord and his timing. That's what brings us here today.

Notice Nehemiah said **“Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place...” Nehemiah 3:1.** I told you last Sunday what Paula and I are giving to the building fund. This is what King David did in 1 Chronicles 29, telling the people what he was giving to build the temple. I said last week I won't ask you to give if I'm not giving. I spoke to the staff this week about giving. We are committed to this project, the deacons are committed, but that isn't enough. Look...

Nehemiah 3 tells of the various individuals and groups that came to work on the wall. They labored together to build. After he tells what the priests did, he tells us, **“The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them.” Nehemiah 3:2.** The only way we can do this is if we all build together. There is no one person that can get the job done. We must stand shoulder to shoulder to build. Believe me, there will be challenges. It happens everytime in a church building program. We will talk about that next Sunday I think, about some of the challenges Nehemiah and the people faced and how they responded. But the important thing for us is to realize we must do this together. Together we build!

Notice there is a place for everyone to give, to serve, to build. **“Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.” Nehemiah 3:12** Sons and daughters, moms and dads, grandparents, young and old, rich and poor, new comers and long-time members, there is room for everyone to rise and build and give. We will do this together. Understand this is not just about giving in an offering or making a financial pledge to help pay for the building, it is making a commitment to work together to build the kingdom, to do the work of the kingdom. That's why I want everyone to participate. I want teenagers to fill out a card to pledge and to give today. Get a job so you can give to this. Giving is for everyone. There is a place for everyone to give, to work to help, to serve. We are going to do this together!

In chapter 4 Nehemiah gives a rallying cry to the people. The threat of attack was looming over them when Nehemiah stood and addressed the people. **“Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and**

your daughters, your wives and your homes.” Nehemiah 4:14 “Don’t be afraid.” Nehemiah reminded them who was with them in this endeavor. Our God is great and awesome so don’t be afraid to give, to build, to serve, to pledge, to do what God is telling you to do!

Nehemiah reminds them why they were doing this or for whom they were doing this. They were building for their brothers and sisters, son and daughters, wives and families. This is why we are doing this. We are building for ourselves, yes, and we will enjoy the improvements, but we are also building for our sons and daughters, for the next generation. We are called to preach an ancient truth in a relevant fashion and setting. If you’ve got children, grandchildren in this church, give for them. Give for their sake, for their future. (Sandi Casey said Don was pledging because he had grandsons in the Marines and he wanted them to be able to tune in from anywhere in the world they happened to be to see and hear the truth preached from this church.)

Remember who we are doing this for. I’ve said repeatedly I don’t even understand it all, or how all of what we are doing will be used in the future to reach the harvest, but I believe we are building for the next generation. We are building in obedience. We are building so the next generation won’t have to race from behind to catch up. We are getting ready to hand this to the next generation of leaders and builders. Don’t be afraid! Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers and sisters and sons and daughters! Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and then dare to give and believe and work together and let’s get the job done.

Nehemiah said **“The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding.” Nehemiah 2:20.** I believe God will give us success but notice what he said in Nehemiah 4:9, **“But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.” Nehemiah 4:9** God gave them success because they prayed and they did their part. God will give us success as we pray and as we do our part and give.

“God you are great and awesome. We believe you will give us success as we endeavor to do what you’ve called us to do. Grant us faith to believe, faith to give, faith to rise and build together, in Jesus name. Amen!”