



### Time to Reflect

- Are we intentional about spending quality time with God? In what ways could we deepen our prayer lives?
- Can you think of some reasons why we can find it difficult to step out in faith and in total trust of God?

Last week we reflected on some promises that were made by the Israelites. These focused on marriage, Sabbath observance and provision relating to worship. This week our attention is drawn to the repopulation of Jerusalem after the rebuilding process had been complete. As we study this passage we will be reminded of the importance of being faithful to God and being will to follow His call.

**“The men, women, and children who helped to populate the city of Jerusalem were serving God, their nation, and future generations by their step of faith.”**

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p144)

### Specifics

- Once again, we encounter a series of names listed by Nehemiah. Before we reflect on these names, there are some important issues that warrant our attention in the first few verses of our passage.
- The repopulation of Jerusalem was an important process. After all the work that had been completed, it was necessary for the Holy City (v1) to be occupied. This would have been a significant witness to the sceptical Gentiles who lived around them.
- Moreover, if the Israelites truly loved God and the Holy City, then they would have been only too pleased to live there.
- Warren Wiersbe offers us further insight as to why the repopulation of Jerusalem was important. He suggests, **“But most of all, God had brought the remnant back home because He had a special job for them to do, and to abandon the restored city was to obstruct the working out of God’s will through Israel.”**<sup>1</sup>
- This reminds us of the importance of being faithful to the call and mission of God. We must be willing to hear what God requires of us and then remain aligned with His will.
- In order to do this, we need to spend time with God – in prayer, Bible study and worship. We are challenged to listen to God.
- Pete Greig, founder of the 24-7 prayer movement, writes: **“To start we must stop. To move forward we must pause. This is the first step in a deeper prayer life: put down your wish list and wait. Sit quietly. Be still. Become fully present in place and time so that your scattered senses can re-centre themselves on God’s eternal presence. Stillness and silence prepare your mind and prime your heart to pray from a place of greater peace, faith and adoration.”**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah* (David. C. Cook, 1992), p144.

<sup>2</sup> Pete Greig, *How To Pray* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2019, pxiii-xiv).

- It was important that the Israelites made the move to repopulate Jerusalem. There is an actual physical process required – the need to get up and go. This is a ‘stepping-out’ in faith and in response to the call of God.
- This can be profoundly challenging and requires trust in God. Wiersbe is very aware of the significance of this and he observes, “Never underestimate the importance of simply being physically present in the place where God wants you.<sup>3</sup>”
- If God has led us to the place of His choosing, then He has plans for us in that particular place. The next step is to then bloom where planted.
- Our passage reveals that some people made the move to Jerusalem willingly while others were drafted (v1-2). It’s interesting that Nehemiah tithed the people and ten percent were chosen to move from the villages into Jerusalem.
- Please note that there were human factors at work in the repopulation process and such factors are always present in a discernment process. Wiersbe draws on this as he writes, “Since there were few residents in the city and since the housing situation was bad (7:4), it isn’t surprising that many of the Jews were unwilling to move.<sup>4</sup>”
- The Israelites needed to look beyond the apparent limitations and constraints. They needed to see potential and not problems, to be positive and trusting as opposed to negative and doubt-filled.
- The challenge was to step out in faith and trust that God was in control.
- We have become used to Nehemiah listing the names of people involved in his projects. For example, in chapter three we were given a list of those who worked on the wall and in chapter ten we encountered the names of eighty-four men who sealed the covenant.
- Now our focus is on the names of those who repopulated Jerusalem. The people of Judah and Benjamin are listed first (v4-9). These two tribes composed the kingdom of Judah after the nation divided (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11-12).
- The priests, Levites and temple workers are named next (v10-24). It is interesting to note that God had set special cities apart for them, so they could have easily lived outside of Jerusalem. The naming of these specific groups is significant in that they chose to be with the people as they served God.
- Wiersbe highlights, “Like Jeremiah, they chose to remain with God’s people, even though it might have been safer and more comfortable elsewhere (Jer.40:1-6).<sup>5</sup>”
- This is a demonstration of faithfulness and trust in God. These groups moved to Jerusalem, in a step of faith, and with the intention of overseeing worship.
- Even a quick read of this passage reveals that it took many different people from a variety of backgrounds to maintain ministry in the rebuilt city.
- We are reminded that everyone truly has a role as we seek to engage in the mission of God. It may not always be easy and it might not be comfortable. But we are reminded that God uses many people with different skills and giftings to get His work done.
- No one is beyond being used by God. Note how the king of Persia helped support the ministry at the temple (v23). Everyone has a part to play and we are challenged to play our part.

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<sup>3</sup> Wiersbe, *Be Determined: Nehemiah*, p144.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p144.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p145.