



## The Lord is With Us: Build the House

Nehemiah prayed simple prayers in struggling situations. Challenged to do an amazing work for an ungrateful people in a land of pain and problems, Nehemiah prayed simple prayers and took significant action. The task was immeasurably daunting, but he knew God sent him to do it.

*Give Your servant success today, and have compassion on him in the presence of this man.*

In the beginning of his vision, he opened with repentance and reminding God of His promises. Then you simply asked for success and compassion.

*They said, "Let's start rebuilding," and they were encouraged (put their hands to work) to do this good work.*

When he had assessed the situation, and formed a small coalition, he went to the people and they responded just as simple. They said, "Let's start", and put their hands to the work.

*Remember me favorably, my God, for all that I have done for this people.*

As he was pushed against the wall and ready to move forward, he asked for favor.

*But now, my God, strengthen me.*

At a critical juncture, he asked for strength.

In our work to reach North Texas and Southern Oklahoma, I relate to Nehemiah. **A destroyed culture of violence, alcohol, and family dysfunction needs built into a haven.**

People are afraid to bring their families into this area. Yet, there is a rising tide of changed lives ready to come together and build. Such things start small. That happened to Nehemiah also.



One night, after a painful day struggling against my crippled knee, I sat out on the front porch of our building in Gainesville. The air was cool and crisp and the kids and workers were gone after a successful night of outreach. That morning we trained probation officers, a pastor, and some strugglers in Mental Health First Aid. I had spent the last two days with some 1-1 with potential pastors, who might join our work. And I was exhausted. The thought entered my mind, "Why not just do the church thing? The money would come. Church people would come. Sure, the strugglers would feel as unwelcome as they do in all the churches, but hey, I could kick back and relax and let the normal flow."

A car struggled into the parking lot with much rattling and noise. As it pulled up and parked, no one got out. My knee was so painful, I just waited in my chair. 20 feet away in the dark, someone wanted ministry and I did not have the physical stamina to walk to them. Finally, a familiar voice spoke, and two people came out of the vehicle. One was covered head to toe in grease. The other showed signs of a meth addict, who had not had a fix in a few days.

We visited outside for a few minutes, and I summoned enough endurance to put up with pain and took them inside for a cup of coffee and some water. The man had brought \$20 that he had outstanding on a workshop. Probably the only \$20 he had. He went through the building and started inventorying jobs he wanted to do to help get us ready for our next step in ministry outreach. Before his crash, he had had a successful business custom painting and remodeling million-dollar homes.

Here I was, a trained executive, a builder of huge works in business and the kingdom, walking and listening to two strugglers with lives lived in disaster **looking over a building and a city in ruins with little more than an unrelenting dream to see a difference. What was I doing here?** Like Nehemiah, counselor to the ruler of the world at the time looking over a destroyed city away from his family and friends, I live out of my comfort zone.

*They said, "Let's start rebuilding," and they were encouraged to do this good work.* Last week, this same man had shown up unannounced and manicured our campus. It took six hours with two men to get it into shape. Unannounced. He has a mind to build. Here he was again.

*But now, my God, strengthen me.* My knee is crippled. I had already missed teaching Wednesday night's bible study due to exhaustion and pain. Here I was back in the middle of the mess.



The two began to talk about their church experiences and being put out due to their struggles and how they wanted to connect family and rebuild.

They looked at me and answered my unasked question, “Why are you standing up now?”

The man answered without being asked. “I had no hope until I came here. Now I have hope.”

Both asked to be baptized and made fresh commitments to Christ. We prayed, and a peace descended from God where usually drugs were called upon for peace that doesn't last.

The night before, a couple met with me and explained how their marriage had been healed using wisdom from our Life Skills workshop. The man stared intently into my eyes and told me that they had no hope until working with me. Another couple came into the sanctuary and asked about helping on the worship team. They had given up hope of connecting in a church. Both couples had their children in the custody of the state for differing reasons. But Hope is their haven.

And, I repented of my unbelief. *Remember me favorably, my God, for all that I have done for this people.* No, we will not do the churchy thing. We will build the house with loving, face to face discipleship and small groups. We will reach out to the most damaged people and see them created new in Christ.

*Give Your servant success today, and have compassion on him in the presence of this man.*

That is my prayer today. We have developed a strong reputation for wisdom, life change and compassion in North Texas. Our small team has huge faith. Our team in workshops and worship and works around the campus from grass clipping to kid's ministry have all struggled with violence and alcohol and drugs and family dysfunction at points in the past. Some closer in time than others. They have been recreated in Christ into something new and strong. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples.”

That is the tough work of the kingdom. Disciplemaking is the work. Fixing fractured families is the challenge. Eventually they will be the ones to support the work financially. They are certainly the ones getting the work done.

Right now, they need your help. We have a challenge. A donor has committed \$10,000 in matching funds if we can raise that much by the end of year. That \$10k plus the matching will add to our hodgepodge of contracts, workshop fees, present partners,



and savings to get another trained worker alongside. Our volunteer team is awesome. They are on their way to being certified peer specialists. We need professionally trained workers with them.

Two right now opportunities need your support.

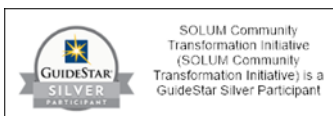
1. A pilot program of pre-trial diversion can help 100 light and first time offenders a year. We can mentor them for six months and help them build better lives instead of entering the prison system. Right now, we need \$3,000 a month for nine months to match the fees they will pay. Will you help with one? \$100 a month supports one through the pilot.
2. Another congregation is ready to be trained 15 miles south of us. To train the team over the next eight months and launch them is not expensive. \$2500 will do it and get them started. They can serve another 30 a year at their site.

Join the team. **May God give us favor in your eyes today.** May you see with vision the work in which you can participate. The best way you can give is to send a check. Then we don't have to pay credit/debit fees. But we also have the convenience of online at [solumcommunity.net/give](http://solumcommunity.net/give). You give one time or make a monthly commitment or whatever hits your fancy. These families need your support.

*Hebrews 13:16 and do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*



Phil Larson, The Think Dr.



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*When you support, you become a part of the team that:*

- *Delivers life changing workshops for adults and teens on probation, parole, and with children in state custody. We have graduated 370 in 4 years in North Texas.*
  - *Assists congregations in replicating this type outreach in conjunction with education, government, and community organizations.*
  - *Promotes strong family values and attention to thousands of legislators in 34 states.*
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