



Lending a Hand.

Have you ever felt like you needed a third hand? There are times in life when having that third hand would be handy. One of my hobbies requires some soldering from time to time and to make life easier I have what is called a third hand jig (also known as a helping hand). This adjustable device holds wires in place while I work with the soldering iron. Without that third hand the task would be difficult.

Chapter 3 of Nehemiah is about helping hands. In many ways this chapter reads like one of those extensive genealogies found in other parts of scriptures. If you're anything like me, I tend to just browse right past these types of passages because let's be honest, we feel like they don't have much to offer, plus all those names are hard to pronounce.

Following his inspection of the wall around Jerusalem Nehemiah began to assign workers to repair areas near where they lived or worked. Chapter three holds the blueprint to the reconstruction process. Starting in verse 2 we see the beginning of two repeating phrases that becomes the mortar between the bricks of such a massive project. "Next to him" or "next to them" is repeated in one form another over 20 times. As I read these words, I noticed a theme that connects to the many aspects of living and working in community both in Nehemiah's day and here and now.

Much like the situation Nehemiah and the people of the city found themselves in, we as followers of Jesus are living amid a similar but different re-building process. As the

church gathers again after a challenging time of physical separation, many of them are starting to re-build. With what seems like an ever-changing blueprint in the process, there is one constant that remains and that is the message and mission of the Gospel.

"Next to him" or "next to them" reveals to us a picture of a community committed to a purpose. In context, Nehemiah was writing about rebuilding the wall (phase two of his plan) so that God's glory would be able to shine. In our context, it is about coming together again and working next to one another so that others will continue to see the glory of God shine through his people.

Many leaders today are calling on the church (you and I) to come together, next to one another, to serve and love one another. No one person could have accomplished the work of repairing the walls around Jerusalem; the same stands for today as we work to rebuild. We must work together if we are to continue our God given mission. Our work is to glorify God, to love one another, to serve with the gifts we have been given and to share the good news of the gospel with those who don't yet know the incredible love of God.

So, how might you be a "third hand" in helping the church grow into a renewed passion and presence in your community? Who will you work "next to"? Not for your glory, but for the glory of our Father in heaven? In the words of Nehemiah, "Let us start rebuilding."