

## PP (Sermon Graphic) Multiply<sup>3</sup>

### Simplify, Shift and Spread

4/2-3/2022

Growing up in Central, NY I had to learn to drive in snow, and one of the things I learned the hard way was a lesson learned in an event I am about to tell you  
 We had about a foot of snow on the ground, and in our town was a road that went around the Fairgrounds, and my friends and I were bored  
 A bored and licensed teen is a dangerous person...parenting lesson in life  
 My friends and I thought we would take my parents massive Oldsmobile and plow through the snow and try and make it around that Fairground Road  
 I kept the speed up and all was fine until so much snow built up under the car that the tires lost contact with the ground...and all things quickly came to an end!  
 As the old saying goes, the rubber must meet the road or you cannot gain traction for movement  
 If you haven't heard the previous 3 sermons in this vision series, you are going to be confused, so let me recap briefly  
 First we looked at a prayer God invited Israel to pray, one we believe the church can and ought to pray as well...that He would increase our people as a flock for sacrifices, that the people would know He is God!  
 We have asked all of you to begin praying **Ezekiel 36:37-38**, that God would multiply His Worshipers, not only here at Cornerstone, but in all the Christ-centered churches near us  
 Then we looked at the mission of the church that Jesus gave us, to multiply disciples  
 We told you how this mission will become the culture of our church, the way we do things here  
 Over the coming months we will be starting more Community Groups, as well as Discipleship Groups in order to stay adhered to this mission  
 Last week we say the major shift we are undertaking, multiplanting  
 Over the next 2-3 years, we hope to plant churches in a family network, and you will see why today as we open to the book of **Nehemiah**

Nehemiah is one of my favorite figures from the bible and therefore one of my favorite books  
 He was a Jew born into captivity in Persia, and became the Cupbearer to the king, which meant he became the 3rd most powerful man in that nation and in effect, the world  
 He had never been to Jerusalem, but when he heard about the broken down condition of both the people of God and the city of God, he **PP "sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven." Nehemiah 1:4**  
 It moved him to act in faith, and God moved the king's heart to allow Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem to rebuild it  
 There are some principles we can learn from this book to make our own strategy successful

### PP Simplify

There is a difference between something being *simplistic* and something being *simple*  
 If someone says a solution to a problem is simplistic, they negatively mean it won't solve the complexity of the situation  
 However, what we mean by *simplify the church* is different  
 Our desire is to be a church with less moving parts  
 A wise mentor once taught me that **PP The good is the enemy of the great**

Enter Nehemiah, who was the master at simplifying  
Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem to a city of rubble whose walls were burned and broken

A city without walls in the Old Testament, was a defeated city, a city of shame, of extreme vulnerability that can have no peace, no joy, no hope

He took a tour of the ruined wall, then gathered all the officials and said, **PP “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” Nehemiah 2:17**

Notice what is subtle, that he didn’t focus on the ruined city of Jerusalem, but the walls of Jerusalem, of first importance...one thing at a time, simplify

In chapter 3, he focused all their efforts on the wall, and the people worked

Some worked on gates, some on the wall, some on watchtowers, but they worked together!

**PP “So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.” Nehemiah 4:6**

The people had a mind to work, all except for one group of people

**PP “And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord.” Nehemiah 3:5**

They wouldn’t ‘**stoop**’ meaning they would not submit to Nehemiah’s authority

They thought they knew better, didn’t like Nehemiah’s way or method or direction

Friends, this plagues the modern church just as it did the ancient people of God

There are always the nobles of Tekoa...anti-authoritarians, rebels, defiant people in the church

In our modern age, everyone has access to knowledge, where all of us can become armchair experts on virtually every subject, even in church leadership

The Apostle Paul warned all of us, **PP “This ‘knowledge’ puffs up, but love builds up.”**

**1 Corinthians 8:1**

Since Genesis 3, knowledge, as wonderful as it is to possess, carries with it the potential to deceive us into believing we have the power, the plan and the proficiency over others

It’s hard to fault anyone for this because we are immersed in this humanistic culture

The American Dream is go to college, get a job, buy a house and raise a family and it all starts with what we are told is the ‘required’ college degree!

Well, the nobles of Tekoa would not serve the Lord, and they would not work on the wall

Yet the rest of the people did, as Nehemiah presented a simple plan that allowed everyone to shift

and join the effort

### **PP Shift**

As a little boy, my family bought an air popper popcorn maker and I would watch, mesmerized, as those kernels superheated and then start exploding into puffy white morsels

You never knew which direction the corn would go when it exploded

Churches tend to be like a popcorn maker, with great explosions of effort in so many incredible ministries, but each going their own direction

Our goal is to simplify our church and shift all ministries to the same focus...discipleship

It is the only mission that Jesus has given His church...*Go and make disciples*

I mentioned last week that **PP The work that God performs, the devil will try to hinder, but he**

*will never succeed in thwarting the plans of God*

Predictably the enemy tried to hinder the work of the people of God in Nehemiah

**PP** *“They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night...When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.” Nehemiah 4:8-9, 15*

As you read on, Nehemiah shifted his work force so that half of the people worked on construction while the other half stood watch and on guard

In this way, the wall was completed in an unbelievable 52 days, shocking their enemies!

It was a single-minded goal, and all the people were working toward it, and the same can be true for us as we all press toward the goal of the mission of Jesus Christ

### **PP Spread**

At the beginning of the Acts series I referred to the 1982 Star Trek 2, The Wrath of Khan, to a scene of a computer simulation of a new technology called the *Genesis Effect*

A rocket was fired to a lifeless moon, striking its surface detonating the Genesis device, rapidly generating water, oceans, forests until it was transformed into a life sustaining planet

Friends, the gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ made a way for sinners to be saved, detonated in our spiritually dead world, and new life is spreading over the globe

The life giving wave is following the expansion of the church

To borrow from **Nehemiah 3**, a church is a watchtower on the wall, and every wall had a series of watchtowers which were garrisons of troops who could be employed in a moment

Because geographical areas often have **PP** *‘lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open spaces’ Nehemiah 4:13*

The wall was to protect the city, and it had low places and open spaces where enemies can attack Watchtowers were built at the most vulnerable parts, right near the gates, and that is one of the greatest purposes for a church...to keep the enemy from streaming in unopposed

Friends, we believe God wants us to spread watchtowers through planting churches in a family Network, and each of those churches to go out into their communities in love

We’re planning to go out into our communities on **May 20-22** for a **Let’s Go** weekend

We are going to ask every single one of you to get involved in 1 of 10 opportunities to love people you do not know, and serve them in the name of Jesus

All in the family will be able to find one way to take the love of Jesus to those in need

Then on Sunday morning that weekend, we will invite all of you to join us downtown for a Flash Mob Worship and Prayer Service, where we will pray the prayer of Ezekiel 36 over the city of Easton

We believe God wants us to be **PP** *A family of Multi-Planting churches that make disciples of Jesus who will live on mission for the glory of God*

What we plan to do is: **PP** *Multiply worshipers, Multiply disciples, Multiply churches*

How we can do this is **PP** Simplify, Shift and Spread!

What are we asking you to do? **PP** *Pray Ezekiel 36; Declare the gospel to the lost all around you; Serve God with all your heart*

Let’s pray