

# Building for God: Registrations

Goldstone Church – 22-Nov-15 10:30am

Nehemiah 7:4-73

## Introduction

This is the last visit to the book of Nehemiah in our current series. We've been looking at how God wants us to be involved in building His kingdom here at Goldstone church?

At the end of Nehemiah 6, after just 52 days, the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls and gates had been completed. Walls that had been ruins for nearly 150 years had been rebuilt in less than 2 months.

Nehemiah 7 is a rather strange passage; It makes you wonder why God took up space in the Bible to include it! More puzzling is that Nehemiah 7:6-73 are essentially the same as Ezra 2. Why would God put this long list of unpronounceable names in the Bible once, let alone twice?

Nehemiah 7 serves as a pivot in the Book of Nehemiah. Chapters 1-6 describes the restoration of the *wall* and gates of Jerusalem. Nehemiah 8-13 tells about the restoration of the *people* of Judah.

Nehemiah 7:4-73, closes the first 6 chapters, then shows how Nehemiah repopulated and built up Jerusalem to a vital centre for national and spiritual life.

Please look beyond this chapter as a random collection of weird names, but rather as an insight into Who Are Important to God?

## 1. INDIVIDUALS ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD (NEH 7:7)

Most of the names from v.8 onwards are listed as "the descendants of", with the numbers alongside each name adding to the impersonal nature of the listing. It's like a telephone directory!

v.7 is different as the names are distinctive individuals.

Although these names may not mean anything to us, each person listed is important to God. God knows each person - by name.

This is echoed in the New Testament. Jesus describes himself as the 'Good Shepherd' and (John 10:3) says "*He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*"

Names are important in the Bible.

Start with the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father... hallowed by your *name*".

The names of characters in the Bible had a purpose, e.g.

- Name could refer to person's birth event, e.g. Moses = "drawn out" from Nile.
- Name could describe parent's reaction to birth, e.g. Isaac = "laughter"
- Name could secure family ties, e.g. John Baptist nearly given father's name.
- Name could give God's message, e.g. Isaiah's first son = "a remnant will return"
- Name could describe the nature of a person, e.g. Jesus = "the Lord saves"

If proof is needed that individuals are important to God, you don't need to go much further than your name. Jesus considers you so important that He has taken the time to know and remember your name.

I might forget your name, but God will never forget who you are.

Individuals are important to God.

## **2. FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD**

**(NEH 7:8-38)**

Nehemiah 7:8 in the Message version of the Bible, "*The numbers of the men of the People of Israel by families of origin.*"

We need to remember that each of these names is a collection of family groups.

God designed the family as the basic unit of society. A man and woman are to leave their own families of origin, and come together in a lifelong, covenant-relationship in marriage. The family is the building block of society; the family is the bedrock of the church.

Important: I am not devaluing singles in any way. Singles are also a vital part of God's family. But the family group as a whole is important to God.

No wonder family values are continually under attack.

In New Testament, one of Jesus' last words on the cross was to give instructions to a disciple to look after his mother Mary.

In the middle of His physical pain and spiritual anguish, (John 19:26-27) Jesus says to His mother, "*Dear woman, this is your son,*" and to the disciple, "*Here is your mother.*"

In Jesus' darkest hour on earth, Jesus focused on the needs of the family unit.

We acknowledge that, for some people, thinking about their earthly family may be difficult and painful. We are not wanting to gloss over your situation. It is a sad fact that humanity is imperfect and sinful, and this expresses itself within the family home.

I feel privileged to have been brought up in a loving Christian home, and I can only express my sympathy and sadness if your family experiences were challenging. But this makes me even more determined to contribute positively to God's family here at Goldstone Church.

God the Father placed His one-and-only precious Son, Jesus, in a family. And Jesus clearly valued his earthly family by ensuring it was taken care of after His death.

In the same way, God knows about our family links and relationships.

Families are important to God.

## **3. GROUPS ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD**

**(NEH 7:39, 44-46)**

Some of the names listed are collected into activity groups and functions; "priests" (v.39), "singers" (v.44), "gatekeepers" (v.45), various "servants" (v.46-60).

These descriptions highlight that, in God's eyes, it is important for people to fulfil the functions and activities that God has called them to do.

In the New Testament, Apostle Paul uses the imagery of the body (1 Corinthians 12). Paul reminds us that the body is a unit, made up of many parts. The focus is not on the importance of each individual part, but rather on how each individual part contributes to the *whole* function of being an effective body.

The groups listed in Nehemiah 7 contribute to building God's kingdom in Jerusalem. Some gave more than others. Some were publically more prominent than others. Some were do-ers, some were organisers and delegators. Everyone was building God's kingdom.

The small groups that we have are part of the 'body function' of Goldstone Church. These groups are places where God is at work. The relationships in these groups are different in a positive sense, enabling different aspects of God's kingdom to be built up.

Jesus invested in close relationships with His 12 disciples. This group was completely different to any other of Jesus' interactions with other people. This group had a unique function, a unique purpose.

Groups are important to God.

## **CONCLUSION**

How can we apply this passage to our lives today?

1. Each one of us is important to God. He knows each one of us by name. God knows all our circumstances. He knows our strengths and weaknesses, our successes and our worries.  
But God wants more. God wants to have an intimate, moment-by-moment relationship with each one of us.  
You and I as individuals are important to God.
2. God knows about our families. He knows the good and not so good parts. Nevertheless, God continues to loves our families and is calling us to keep on loving them too – even though it may be difficult.  
Families are important to God.
3. God knows about the various groups represented at Goldstone church. He knows their unique characteristics and purposes. God is calling us to fulfil the tasks that He has given us through these groups. God is calling us to play our part in Building God's kingdom here at Goldstone Church.

How will you respond?

## **SUMMARY**

As we draw this series in Nehemiah to a close, let us keep his example in mind, as we live our lives as disciples and followers of Jesus Christ:

1. Nehemiah knew the task that God had given him to do. He never forgot that God had sent him to Jerusalem to work and to demonstrate to the people around him how to live.

God has called us here to build His kingdom and to be ambassadors and representatives for Him in this community.

2. Nehemiah never forgot his own identity. He knew who he was - part of God's people.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we must always remember that we are part of God's people. We are important to Him. Our identity is in Christ.

3. Nehemiah put into practice what he knew. He was a no-nonsense, practical man who only listened to Godly wisdom. He investigated carefully, shared out the jobs and delegated responsibility.

In the power of the Holy Spirit, let us do what it takes to get the job done.

4. Above all else, Nehemiah prayed. He prayed for God's timing, to know God's agenda, for God's wisdom.

May we continue to pray that "God's kingdom" will come, "God's will" will be done, here at Goldstone Church.

**AMEN**